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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SECONDARY CHARACTERS
TO THE LIFE AND IDEALS OF ISRAEL

Submitted by

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OUTLINE

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SECONDARY CHARACTERS TO THE LIFE AND IDEALS OF ISRAEL

I. Introduction, showing purpose of the Thesis:

- A. To portray primary characters for a background
- B. To analyze more fully the work and worth of secondary characters
- C. To trace development of religious and social ideals of primary characters
- D. To summarize and evaluate the abiding contributions which the secondary characters have made to the life and ideals of Israel

II. Body of Thesis

A. Primary characters:

1. Abraham, the father of his race
2. Moses, the law-giver and religious founder
3. David, the ideal king
4. Isaiah, the sublimest of the prophets
5. Ezekiel, a leader in individualism and idealism
6. Nehemiah, the reformer

B. Secondary characters:

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 - a. Jethro
 - b. Balaam
 - c. Caleb
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 - b. Deborah
 - c. Gideon
 - d. Ruth
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 - (1) Jonathan, the ideal friend
 - (2) Benaiah, the man of valor
 - (3) Ittai, the man of devotion
 - (4) Hushai, the man of loyalty
 - (5) Rizpah, the pattern of maternal devotion



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- b. During Ahab's day
 - (1) Jezebel, the autocrat
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- 4. During period from 650 B.C. to 500 B.C.
 - a. Nahum
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 - c. Zechariah
- 5. During the Maccabean period
 - a. Mattathias
 - b. Judas
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 - d. Simon
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III. Summary and evaluation:

- A. Primary characters
 - 1. Religious ideals
 - 2. Social ideals
- B. Secondary characters
 - 1. Religious ideals
 - 2. Social ideals

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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SECONDARY CHARACTERS TO THE LIFE AND IDEALS OF ISRAEL

I. Introduction.

My purpose in this Thesis is to portray the life and ideals of a sufficient number of primary characters of the nation of Israel to show how they have furnished the background for the action of the secondary characters; to analyze more fully the work and worth of secondary characters as to their influence, for good or ill, on the religious and social life of Israel; to trace the development of religious and social ideals as portrayed by the primary characters; and to summarize and evaluate the abiding contributions which the secondary characters have made.

It is not my purpose to weigh evidences as to the historicity of the accounts of the early characters in biblical literature, but rather to use them, as did their narrators, at times, to set forth the racial life and ideals of the people of Israel.

II A. Primary Characters.

The study of the great personalities of Israel acquaints one with the religious and social ideals of the nation. Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Nehemiah stand out preeminently as typical primary characters: Abraham as the founder or "father" of his race; Moses as the law-giver and the founder of their religion; David as the ideal king and national leader; Isaiah as the sublimest of the prophets; Ezekiel as the leader in individualism and legalism; and Nehemiah as the one who reintroduced and enforced legalism upon a run-down social order.

The primary characters are mountain peaks, they are beacon lights, they are household words. These great personalities have embodied the highest ideals of the nation, they have

molded its civic and religious life ,else they would not be called "great" by their own and succeeding generations. Their lives and ideals have been exhaustively proclaimed from the pulpit, diligently studied in Sunday Schools, and profusely written about by eminent men. The records of their deeds have been duly weighed, they have been sifted like fine wheat in order that nothing be lost. Notwithstanding the fact that no new contributions can be made, yet such features of their biographies will be set forth as seem fitting to the purpose of this Thesis.

1. Abraham

Abraham felt that he had a call to a more lofty and spiritual religious life than was common with his compatriots. This necessitated his leaving his own land and going forth into another in which he could better develop his ideals. He gave heed to the call, he obeyed the promptings of the voice within and journeyed forth, he knew not whither. He became a wanderer because he had the conviction that he had been called of God to go into a new environment, not alone for a blessing for himself, but also that he might bless others. "In thee shall all the families of the earth bless themselves," reads Genesis 12:3b. The Israelites have always traced their lineage back to Abraham and they always speak of the God of Abraham in such a way as to convince one that their religious ideas came from Abraham. The authors of the early documents, which date at least eight centuries before Christ, were greatly impressed with the marvelous personality of Abraham. Foakes-Jackson says: "Those who lived before and those who lived after the Exile agree in regarding him as the greatest of men, the model of piety to every Israelite. There is a grandeur about the patriarch which is heightened by the loneliness of his life, for all his surroundings only serve to show how much greater he was than the men and women of his age. But for the single appearance of the mysterious priest king of Salem, no human being approaches him in dignity or elevation of nature." ¹ Many people, under similar circumstances to those of Abraham's, would have lost their ideals and would have

1. Foakes-Jackson's "The Biblical History of the Hebrews to the Christian Era," p. 26.

become on a level with their compatriots. Not so Abraham. He kept his faith in God, he kept his dignity, he kept a stately bearing amongst his Canaanite neighbors. He was a marked man wherever he went.

He established ideals for Israel. Throughout his entire life Abraham is known as a man of faith. He had faith to believe the seemingly impossible. He believed a land would be given him; he believed he would become the father of a multitude even though he had no children and had reached the age when it was not probable that he would beget children. He believed Jehovah would keep His covenant with him even when he felt called upon to sacrifice Isaac.

The nation which claims Abraham as "father" also recognized his close relation with Jehovah, his call, contemplative nature which made him called the "Friend of God".¹ Throughout his whole career Abraham stands on a lofty plain because of this communion with God - a communion that influenced all his acts and elevated all his thoughts. In various places where he went, he made provision for worship by the erection of altars: under the oak of Moreh in Shechem; between Bethel and Ai; under the oaks of Mamre in Hebron; and on the heights of Mount Moriah.² No one can ever be in doubt as to his religious convictions or as to the solace he experienced in his religious life or as to the determining factor religion played in his life.

Closely connected with, and as an outgrowth of, his faith in God and communion with God was his feeling of brotherliness with all men. Consider his generosity to Lot. When the flocks and herds had increased so that the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot began to quarrel over pasturage and water, Abraham gave his nephew the choice of the land and took what was left.³ Then the five kings from afar captured Lot and his possessions, Abraham "led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued" the enemy, and "brought back his brother Lot, and his goods and the women also, and the people,"⁴ but he took no spoil for himself and we never hear of his waging warfare for his own personal advantage or gain.

1. Ex. 23:11 and James 2:23

3. Gen. 13:11, 12

2. Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:18; 22:9

4. Gen. 14:14-16

He entertained strangers with such pleasing hospitality that he has passed down through the ages as the embodiment of virtue required in a host: he ran to meet the strangers, he begged them as a favor to become his guests, he attended to their comfort and ease, he hastened to provide a bountiful repast, he accompanied them when they continued their journey,¹ and he received a most unlooked-for reward, for his guests proved to be messengers of Jehovah. He had "entertained angels unawares."² The angels, in return, not only promised Abraham a son but they so valued his "righteousness and justice" that they acquainted him with the coming destruction of Sodom. Abraham's great love for his fellowmen caused him to plead that the city might be spared, peradventure fifty - or even ten "righteous men shall be found therein."³ Most truly can we say that Abraham believed in the brotherhood of men.

2. Moses

No personality has made a deeper impression on the people of Israel than has Moses. Indeed, Moses, rather than Abraham, is often considered the founder of the national and religious life of Israel. All we know of the Israelites before Moses' day is that they were a group of nomads living in Canaan and that one tribe of them went into Egypt where they increased in numbers but were eventually reduced to serfdom by the ruling monarch of, or before, the time of Rameses II. Then Moses appeared on the scene and a transformation took place. Under his teaching these slaves decided to strike for freedom. Under his statesmanship, Pharaoh was frightened into letting thousands of serfs have their liberty. "And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve Jehovah, as ye have said. Take both your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also."⁴

Moses had been born into a family of Levites,⁵ educated in the

1. Gen. 18:2-8, 16

2. Gen. 18:32

5. Ex. 2:1-10

2. Heb. 13:2

4. Ex. 12:30-32

Egyptian court as the adopted son of a princess,¹ and schooled in wilderness ways while he lived with his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian.² Moses took up the occupation of a shepherd - one that gave him much chance for meditation, one that acquainted him with desert life, one that sharpened his wits and developed his resources, one that brought him into communion with the Divine. Gradually the conviction grew that he was commissioned to go back to Egypt and to deliver the slaves, his own people, from their serfdom. It was not the impulse of the moment that mastered him, but, no doubt, the deep thought of years. One day he definitely decided to accept the call of God and to become the saviour of his people.³

Scant as the records are, we are left in no doubt that his task was no easy one. Moses had grown grey since he left the Egyptian court, he had become bronzed and weather-beaten of countenance, but his soul had been set ablaze with a Divine call and with a noble desire to relieve a nation of oppressed. We cannot tell how many hours he talked with his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam before they were convinced of his call and were won to aid him in his mission. The steps taken which led to the slaves' acceptance of him as their deliverer is not recorded in detail. The watching of his wits with the king's magicians and his diplomatic manoeuvres with Pharaoh are given more attention and indicate a long period of time.⁴ And the Exodus! No other event in all Hebrew history equals that of the Exodus. Again and again do the Fathers reiterate: "When Israel went forth out of Egypt."⁵ Kittel says: "If any incident in the Mosaic tradition can claim to be founded upon good historical evidence it is this" of the Exodus.⁶

The Israelites became the followers of Jehovah, a God who dwelt in Mount Sinai - a war God who spoke in the thunder and manifested His will through Moses, His spokesman. Jehovah, as known in Moses' day was a mysterious and terrifying Being, for He wrapped Himself "in a thick cloud", spoke amidst thunders and lightnings, fire and smoke, voices of trumpets which waxed louder and louder, and the

1. Acts 7:22

4. Ex. 7-12

2. Ex. 3:1

5. Psal. 114:1

3. Ex. 4:18

6. Kittel's "The Religion of the People of Israel",
p. 54

quaking of the very mountain itself.¹ As Kittel remarks: "He was a God who smote without warning those who came too near his holy mountain and who broke forth in explosions of terrible anger."² His wrath waxed hot and fierce at times, but, also, at times, He "repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people."³

Moses was on intimate terms with God and he conversed with Him many times. Moses often differed from God and reasoned with Him until God got angry with Moses.⁴ Moses asked God why He had dealt "so ill" "with the Israelites", and he pleaded with God to forgive the sinful people or blot him out of His book.⁵ But Moses also had higher conceptions of God. Jehovah was a national God, "the God of the Hebrews."⁶ He would tolerate no other God for the Israelites.⁷ He was an ethical God, "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth; keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."⁸

It would be most interesting if we could determine whether Moses came to know Jehovah from his early home training or from his association with Jethro in the wilderness. There is no question that his knowledge broadened and deepened during the later time. He came to have a holy reverence for God which never left him. He heard God call him and he was told to put off his shoes when standing on holy ground.⁹ Later, near Mount Sinai, he sanctified the people and forbade their touching the holy mount under pain of death.

Moses learned a new name for God in the wilderness, "I AM THAT I AM,"¹⁰ and it was in the power of that name that he returned to Egypt. This name, however, connected with that of the God of Abraham, for God told Moses to say: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you."¹¹ Jehovah, also, was the God of Jethro, for Jethro worshipped Him in company with the Israelites at which time Jethro, rather than Moses, officiated as priest.¹²

1. Ex. 19: 9, 16-19

2. Kittel's "The Religion of the People of Israel", P. 56

3. Ex. 32: 11-14

4. Ex. 4: 14

5. Ex. 32: 32

6. Ex. 3: 18

7. Ex. 20: 2

8. Ex. 34: 3, 7

9. Ex. 3: 5

10. Ex. 3: 14

11. Ex. 3: 15

12. Ex. 18: 12

Moses' conception of Jehovah had some "traces of local influences from the wildernessreminiscences of the terrible nature-God flashing fire"¹ which he probably learned from Jethro.

Moses taught the people how to worship Jehovah. An ark was made to symbolize the presence of Jehovah and a tabernacle in which to house the ark was prepared from a prescribed pattern. A priestly office connected with Aaron and his sons was inaugurated and a form of worship was prescribed, every act of which was according to the laws laid down by Moses in the Book of the Covenant - the feasts, the offerings, the processions. As Henry Preserved Smith says: "Moses was the founder of the particular religion of Israel."² He was their civil ruler, their "great liberator", their "minister of the oracle and the declarer of the will of Yahweh," he was their "inaugurator of the priesthood and the originator of the theocracy."³

But Moses is best known as the law giver. In Malachi we are exhorted to "Remember the law of Moses."⁴ The author of the Gospel of John states that "the law was given through Moses"⁵ and "we have found him, of whom Moses in the law---wrote."⁶ The scribes and Pharisees refer to the "law of Moses" as authoritative.⁷ Jesus is recorded as saying, "Did not Moses give you the law?"⁸ The unknown writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews accepts Moses' authorship of the law.⁹ Scholars, however, do not accept Moses as the author of all the laws in the Pentateuch, because these codes show a development covering years of time. Kittel declares: "He (Moses) was a law-giver --- in the sense that he gave his people norms of conduct and controlled in the name of deity the decisions given at the sanctuary."¹⁰

Moses was a magnificent figure. His combination of excellencies is well expressed by Professor Bailey when he said: "The proof of this colossal genius lies rather in these things - that he was able so to organize the Hebrew that his authority after his

1. Kittel's "The Religion of the People of Israel," p. 65

2. Smith's "The Religion of Israel," p. 59

3. Ibid., p. 48

4. Mal. 4:4

5. John 1:17

6. John 1:45

7. John 8:5

8. John 7:19

9. Heb. 9:19; 10:28

10. Kittel's "The Religion of the People of Israel," p. 56

death increased rather than diminished ,and served to keep the state essentially democratic;that he attached the people to Jehovah by ceremonies so free from the debasing forms which surrounding nations used that they have survived to the present day;and that he established civil laws so wise that all future generations of Hebrews sought authority for their legislation by ascribing it to him. But the ultimate greatness of Moses rests not so much in what he accomplished as in what he was. It is his spiritual quality,rare in any day but unaccountable in that primitive epoch,that made him one of the few commanding figures of all time;it is his courage,his devotion,his wisdom,his unwavering trust in Jehovah. He was the first great prophet not only in Hebrew history but in world history,speaking out of personal knowledge of God convictions about the divine will for men.Through his work as spokesman of Jehovah,as prophet of the unseen,he confirmed - one might almost say created - in the Hebrew race their marked capacity for religion.His absolute faith in the ability of Jehovah to lead his people into a 'large place' inspired others with that faith.And the prophets of a later age,in picturing the glories of their Messianic deliverer,could think of no higher praise for him than to cause Moses to say in prophecy: 'Jehovah your God shall raise up for you a prophet like unto me.' He was indeed like a lofty mountain peak,to which men toiling in the valleys afar off lift their eyes to find inspiration and blessing in its loftiness and purity and majesty."¹

3.David

Leaving the days of beginnings behind,let us see the conditions of religious and social life in the days of the kingdom. David stands as the best loved of the Judean kings and he typifies their highest ideals.Perhaps 250 years had passed between the times of Moses and David.David's reign no doubt has been idealized by writers of later generations, but,even making allowances for this,it stands for several distinctive things. David has come down in history as the ideal ruler,as the one who extended

1.Bailey and Kent's "History of the Hebrew Commonwealth," pp.45,46

the kingdom almost to the dimensions promised to Abraham.

One of the early lessons David taught the Israelites was that of loyalty to the reigning kings. In a land and at a time where might practically stood for right, David, against the advice and counsel of his followers, refused to put Saul to death, even after David himself had been anointed king and had been proclaimed as the Lord's chosen one by the seer, Samuel, and when Saul had sought by every means in his power to take David's life.¹ David punished by death those who thought to win his favor by claiming that they had slain Saul and Saul's son, king Ishbosheth. He declared no one had the right to touch the Lord's anointed, no matter what the provocation.²

David developed new features in the life and ideals of Israel. He came to the throne at an opportune time. Saul had laid the foundations for the united kingdom and had done some pioneer work, but standards had not become too rigid to prevent David's ideas from molding public opinion. He developed a higher type of organization in governmental affairs. This needed to be done because the kingdom was larger and had to have more officials for carrying on the new enterprises. A royal secretary was imperative, as were also priests, prophets, counselors, a personal body guard, army officials, builders, artificers, stewards, overseers of workmen, and many other types of employees.³

One of the very most important things that David ever did - the one which had the most far-reaching consequences - was the conquering of the king of Jebus and the establishment of Jerusalem as his capital city. He made Jerusalem a religious center that came to be the archetype of something higher than an earthly habitation. It became the City of Zion, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, let down from Heaven, and even symbolic of the Heavenly City not made with hands, eternal in the skies.⁴

Jerusalem was a strategic point, for it was centrally located. It had hitherto been held by heathen people, so that it had no associations either with the northern or southern Hebrew tribes to awaken among either of them any feelings of jealousy; it was easily fortified because of the deep valleys on three sides - it

1. I Sam. 24:6

2. II Sam 1:14-16

3. II Sam. 8:16-18 and II Sam. 20:23-26

4. II Sam. 5:6-9 and Rev. 21:2

had been the boast of the Jerusites that the city could be defended by their lame and blind - and it added to David's renown to have accomplished the hitherto impossible.¹

The city proved not only acceptable as the national capital, but it has always held ever since unique significance. People of many sects and creeds have fought for possession there, its valleys have run with the blood of its sons and daughters, martyrs to their patriotic devotion. Even today, the whole region is known as the Holy Land and thousands believe when the millenium comes, it will center about Jerusalem and that the scales of judgment will swing from the arcades erected about the Mosque of Omar. Kittel says: "It was through the fact that Jerusalem became at once the king's residence and the seat of the national government, that the Davidic dynasty belongs together. More and more the forms of David and Zion grew to religious significance, and if in the subsequent history of Israel one seeks for the source of their deepest longing for God's gracious help, it is only to be found in the expectation of an exalted son of David or a new David."² Isaiah 11:1 reads: "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his root shall bear fruit."

David greatly increased the territory of Israel by many successful conquests. His life was one of warfare and he was eminently successful in this particular. Saul's enemies, the Philistines, became tolerably quiet after David rose to power. His bodyguard was composed of men from Philistia who proved very loyal. The Ammonites, Moabites, and Edonites were brutally brought into subjection. The Syrians to the north were forced to pay tribute, and the tribes to the south to pay homage. Hiram of Ebericia was an ally and devoted friend of David's and much progress in commercial enterprises developed through that alliance. The Philistines were subdued and the land was at peace. David's officers, hence of great value in building David's palace, and, later, the Temple and Solomon's royal houses.

But no estimate of David could be complete without taking

1. II Sam. 5:6

2. Kittel's "The Bible and the People of Israel," p. 85.

into account his religious connections. The Hebrews believed that David was the man through whom should develop the Messianic hope. The family of David was never to be blotted out - a son of his would always be upon the throne of Israel.¹ Indeed, he became the "watchword for religious hope."² David seems always to have known Jehovah and to have led a religious life. One of our earliest pictures of him portrays his utmost confidence in Jehovah - he could meet the giant with success because he was battling for Jehovah.³ As his nature was much more passionate and emotional than was Moses', his type of religion was correspondingly different. Music and dancing before the Lord were features of worship.⁴ David himself played skilfully upon a harp⁵, and he has been called the "sweet psalmist of Israel."⁶ He brought the ark to Jerusalem and prepared for the erection of the Temple, nevertheless he added something of the Canaanitish ideas to his religion. He showed his superstition in the interpretation of the cause of the 'three-years' drouht, for he accepted the explanation of the Gibeonites and permitted seven of Saul's descendants to be hanged in order to appease an offended deity who had withheld rain because some years before Saul had broken the treaty made between Joshua and the "hewers of wood and the drawers of water," by putting some of the Gibeonites to death.⁷ Yet David had, during all this time, stood as a religious hero whose allegiance to Jehovah was unquestioned.

In summarizing David's character and his contributions to the Hebrew life and ideals, one meets with very different opinions in regard to him. Whatever these opinions, it is certain that no person could have made the profound impression David made on his own, and later, times without having elements of a great character in him. No man could have possessed such powers for making and holding friends if he had not been worthy of friendship. It was his popularity that aroused Saul's jealousy to murderous heat. He more than once showed great magnanimity towards enemies, such as no small-souled man could have done. David showed thoughtfulness for the soldiers' welfare who were under him and he intro-

1. II. Sam. 7:16, 16

2. Kittel's "The Religion of the People of Israel," p. 84

3. I. Sam. 17:46, 47

4. Josh. 6:50 and II. Sam. 11:1

4. II. Sam. 2:14, 16

5. I. Sam. 16:16, 17

6. I. Sam. 16:16, 17

duced one new custom which thereafter became a military law: Those who stayed by the baggage received just the same share as those who went into battle and won the victory.¹

Professor Cornill says of David: "He is the most luminous figure and the most gifted personage in Israelitish history, surpassed in ethical greatness and general historical importance only by Moses."² Yet we shudder over his treatment of the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites and over his sins in connection with Bathsheba and Uriah, nevertheless "It is hardly possible," declares Professor Bailey, "to overestimate what David did for the Hebrews. He found them disorganized, discouraged, only slightly conscious of their unity of blood and their common destiny, holding on to a precarious existence in the midst of determined foes. He left them a nation, united as they were destined never to be again, their loyalty centered about a dynasty and capital city, conscious of a physical and moral superiority over their neighbors, the dominant race of that century in south-western Asia. This is an accomplishment worthy of the highest genius. We can easily understand how the affections of Israel should so center about this figure that a second David became the dream and hope of Israel's future."³

4. Isaiah

After another gap of about 250 years, we meet with the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah was a lofty figure, commonly called the sublimest of the prophets, who "trode the high places of the earth" and "walked among men as a king."⁴ His horizon was wide and his vision clear. He was, first of all, a spiritual man who was immensely impressed with the holiness of God. This holiness seemed to vibrate and to fill the earth with God's glory. God filled the earth. He was a universal God. His universality was stressed by Isaiah as by no previous prophet. Religion was a serious thing for Isaiah. He put his whole soul into his mission; he never swerved from his conception of duty. Smith declares:

1. I Sam. 30:24

2. Bailey and Kent's "History of the Hebrew Commonwealth," p.120

3. Ibid., pp.120,121

4. Knudson's "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy," p.130

"The whole impression of Isaiah is that of a more lofty conception of God than that expressed by any of his predecessors... All his utterances impress us as those of a man thoroughly honest, thoroughly courageous, and thoroughly devoted to the God of Israel... What made Isaiah a religious leader was the firmness with which he held on to his trust in Yahweh alone."¹ "Isaiah was the first to formulate the great doctrine of faith as the condition of salvation."² It was Isaiah who said, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence is your strength,"³ and "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."⁴ Religion was a personal experience with Isaiah, it was no mere external affair to be put on and taken off like a garment. It was a heart affair. He scathingly denounced all who "draw nigh to God with their lips while their hearts are far away."⁵ "Bring no more vain oblations... Wash you, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Isaiah never divorced his religion from his politics. Religion and politics were inseparable in his estimation. His political interests were religious interests. As Kittel says: "Isaiah consciously and explicitly makes the whole of life-history, even in the sphere of politics, subject to the great ethical and religious forces, God and the moral order... Isaiah was not a man of mere words. When he had the king's ear... he left no stone unturned to have his demands put into execution. These demands were clear and stern... During this king's (Hezekiah's) lifetime, many aberrations of the popular religion were laid aside and many stern measures corresponding with the stern and serious moral conceptions of Isaiah and of his disciples were realized."⁷

1. Smith's "The Religion of Israel," pp. 158, 160, and 161

2. Hudson's "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy," p. 125

3. Isa. 30:15

4. Isa. 7:9

5. Isa. 29:13

6. Isa. 1:13, 16, 17

7. Kittel's "The Religion of the People of Israel," pp. 141 and 145

Isaiah was no unbalanced, hysterical person - far from it. He moved through his troublous times with calmness and dignity, yet he was not lacking in enthusiasm and emotion. Gardiner says Isaiah's prophecy shows the "combination of vividness and concreteness of thought and clear insight into fact, with the burning and inspired earnestness of feeling which transmutes the facts and endows them with an instant and lasting effect on the imagination. Isaiah, more than any other prophet, shows in the highest degree these two qualities and the perfect balance between them." 1

In Isaiah the zenith of literary achievement was reached. He used concrete words, homely but telling figures of speech, yet his message soared on wings of imagination, and was charged with intensity of feeling. Truly his message was "clothed with a language marked by profusion and splendor of imagery" which was of "surpassing grandeur". 2

c. Ezekiel

Ezekiel was a prophet of more than ordinary interest yet not one with whom the Occidental can feel exactly on terms of intimacy. We read his accounts of strange visions, couched in allegorical pictures which are weird and meaningless to our ears, and of such unusual actions that we would put him down for a madman and say that his symbolic prophecies were raised to ridiculous extremes. But sober judgment forces us to acknowledge that Ezekiel was a man of power who wrought mightily for the religious life and ideals of Israel - and it was not alone for his own day - indeed that was the least of his influence, it was something that became permanent, so lasting that Ezekiel has been fitly called the "Father of Judaism." Smith says: "Ezekiel most distinctly influenced his people by his plans for the future. But before these could be fully appreciated the prophet had a destructive work to do. This was to rid the exiles of many cherished notions. The prophetic ideal had never really impressed the great mass of the people. By Ezekiel it was so

1. Gardiner's , "The Bible as English Literature", p. 231. :

2. Ibid, p. 231.

firmly held that he demanded a complete break with the past. Not that he had ceased to be an Israelite; the God whom he worshipped was the ancestral God, Yahweh, who in the most literal sense had taken up his dwelling in the center of the earth - in Jerusalem.¹ Ezekiel, however, was not in Jerusalem. He had been taken into captivity along with the cream of the Jerusalem populace when King Jehoiachin and the royal court had voluntarily surrendered in B.C. 597, thereby hoping to save the city from destruction and God's people from exile - but the plan had not succeeded. Thousands went into captivity but no other one made such marked influence upon later developments in Hebrew history as did Ezekiel. After national life was broken up, Ezekiel became the advocate of individualism.² This emphasis on individualism was marked as it had not been before. The bubble containing the belief in the inviolability of Jerusalem and the Hebrew nation had burst, the city had surrendered and the leading people were exiled. Ezekiel met the situation. "The individual did not have to find a new God," for thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country."³

But Ezekiel's emphasis on the law was carried to the ^{nth} degree. He carefully wrote out requirements for priests and Levites, for a model Temple and a prescribed ritual. Thus one sees that he bent all his energies to preserve Hebrew religion at a critical time and he succeeded so well that it has never been lost. Again quoting Smith: "To our prophet (Ezekiel) the crowning event of the world's history will be the return of

1. Smith's "The Religion of Israel," pp. 197, 198

2. Ezek. 33: 20

3. Ezek. 34: 11-16

Yahweh to his temple, which will take place after the restoration of the people to their own land. The importance of the event may be measured by the particularity with which the restored temple is described and the care taken to regulate all that belongs to it."¹ This description fills nine chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy. With such effect did he portray his vision that from that day, the temple ritual was of first concern and "ecclesiasticism" "triumphed" and "increasingly" dominated "Jewish thought." "By putting religion into legal form Ezekiel protected it from a disintegrating syncretism. On the other hand, legalism is always in danger of degenerating into formalism,"² and that is in reality what actually happened so that Jesus had to fight to overthrow this formalism which was bent on keeping the letter of the law from which all spiritual meanings had long since fled.

6. Nehemiah

Nehemiah is the primary character of the Persian Period, the one who did much to organize the society at Jerusalem in a critical time. For quite 150 years many Hebrews had been living in Babylonian exile. Jerusalem had been burned, the Temple destroyed, and the cream of the population deported. Ten or more nationalities had been thrust upon the scum of the Hebrew population and, although a few became wealthy, the rest were, according to Isa. 42:12,

"A people spoiled and plundered.

They are all snared in holes,

And hidden in prison houses.

They have become a spoil

With none to rescue,

An object of plunder,

With none to say, Restore."

Hence, feebleness, inefficiency, robbery, and plundering had been the Judean record. Foreigners were in power, and even the priests had become debased and as ready to oppress their fellowmen as were the foreign element.

But in Nehemiah's day, the Temple had been rebuilt under the

1. Smith's "The Religion of Israel," p. 207

2. Ibid., p. 211

protection of Cyrus, yet the walls were still untouched and the situation was deplorable. Some visionary soul proposed that an embassy should be sent to King Artaxerxes, soliciting aid. No doubt he was laughed to scorn and told it would avail nothing, but the embassy set out and arrived at Shushan, the palace. An interview was procured with Nehemiah, the King's cup-bearer, a Jew who was still loyal to his countrymen's religion and zealous for its advancement.¹ Nehemiah was deeply touched with the appeal and made a record for himself when he gave up a luxurious court position to cast in his lot with the people of Jerusalem for a period of twelve years, then, later, for a second time of service. His work required great tact, great energy, great self-sacrifice. The wealthy did not want his interference in their money-making schemes. Bitter enmity was shown by Sanballat, Tobias, and Geshem.² With fiendish cunning they planned in every way to undermine his influence. They even sought to take his life, but in this they were not successful. They tried ridicule, they tried false reports, they hired prophets to advise to his harm. Nehemiah did not bluster nor return evil for evil - he just kept on working and praying. He left vengeance with the Lord.

Nehemiah had to meet a new social condition and institute social reforms. These were of lasting effect in Jewish life and ideals.³ The one of great importance was concerning Sabbath regulations, for he stopped trade on the Sabbath, he had the gates closed to traffic, and he had the law read and enforced.⁴ He sought to do away with foreign marriages so strenuously that it led to violence. Nehemiah "contended" with such people, he "smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves."⁵ The Jews would not allow the mixed population who had lived for two generations in Jerusalem to have a share in the rebuilding of the Temple or of the walls. This restriction in connection with the laws against foreign marriages eventually led to a schism which def-

1. Neh. 1:4

4. Neh. 13:22-23

2. Neh. 4

5. Neh. 13:25

3. Neh. 13:15-22

initely separated the Samaritans from the Jews and has caused much bitterness of feeling from that time even to the present.

In the study of the character of Nehemiah, we are most fortunate in having had preserved what appear to be his personal memoirs. They are unusually vivid and illuminating. They flash with the fire of his enthusiasm and zeal, they hold one spellbound with excitement when the plots of his enemies thicken about him, they amaze one with his indefatigable energy, his unflinching adherence to the program he set for himself, his ability to organize and execute, his generosity and hospitality, and, above all, they fill one with admiration for his whole-hearted service for his countrymen and for the advancement of the cause of his religion. His religious faith was the unifying factor of his life - the guiding principle for all his actions. He was a man of prayer and he believed Jehovah would note his efforts. In fact, he reminded Jehovah several times to "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the observance thereof."¹ Yet we do not get any impression that he was religious because it said. His self-sacrificing deeds belie that interpretation. His record unmistakably shows that he was not in Judea to make money. For twelve years he did not "eat the bread of governor....neither bought we any land....Moreover there were at my table..one hundred and fifty men, besides those that came unto us among the nations that were round about us."² No, it was not for gold nor for fame nor for position - he sacrificed all these, so the world of his day would have said, when he left his place in the royal court to labor in poverty-stricken Judea. He did all for the cause of religion. He took his religion so much to heart that it "grieved him sore"³ when the Temple was desecrated and people were negligent and careless about its service. He did not sit inactive, nor withdraw from the sight of all this irreligiousness, nor spend his time talking pessimistically about the degeneracy of his own generation: he set to work to see what could be accomplished to better the situation. His personal example was what counted towards his great accomplishments in reform, as it does count in molding civic and religious life and ideals.

1. Neh. 13:14

2. Neh. 5:14-17

3. Neh. 13:8

II B. Secondary characters.

We turn now from the consideration of ^{the} primary characters which have furnished the fundamental religious and social ideals of Israel to the main question under consideration: that of the work and worth of the secondary characters in the same fields.

The term, "secondary characters", as used in this Thesis, has to do with people who have a record in biblical history, either for good or ill, even though their exploits are not of the highest order or the accounts of their lives are not lengthy enough to claim the attention of the indifferent or careless reader. Lengthy biographies are not necessary. In the "whole course of a man's life" how many volumes might be written, setting forth the daily routine, monotonously repeated, when these inconsequential doings might better be abbreviated into a paragraph! I agree with Papini when he says: "I care less for the whole course of a man's life than for his own distilling essence."¹ When the distilled essence of the so-called secondary characters is unbottled, it makes the atmosphere pungent either with a bad odor or with a delightful fragrance. While a few may be like the *Symplocarpus foetidus* which grows abundantly in swamps and ditches, the many are like the *Linnea borealis*, renowned for the delicacy of the exquisite perfume which it shakes from its pink-lined bells of bloom. In the early summer time it holds its services for all who have ears delicate enough to hear the summons from its tiny twin bells or have olfactory nerves sensitive enough to nose out the place where it collects its worshipping devotees along some woodland trail on a northern mountain-side.

It is certain that all secondary characters have made a sufficiently strong impression on their day and generation to earn a place in their national history. That the account may be brief is immaterial because the influence of a life may be properly evaluated without having in possession a lengthy biography. One drop of "distilled essence" may give fragrance sufficient to fill a cathedral; one sentence may sum up a life's history. This statement: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"² is brief but exceedingly fragrant. Short biographies have a message for the thoughtful. Papini declares that "the most

1. Cooper's "The Life and Work of William Tyndale", p. XX of Intro.

highly educational biographies are those of men of whom little or nothing are known. Those are the books that set forth the human ideal that tells us what a man ought to be."¹ Perhaps we better say that the biographies of those men "of whom little or nothing is known" do not always set forth what a man ought to be, but what he actually is. The "distilled essence" is pure, it is genuine, it is unmistakable. Therefore we shall maintain in this Thesis that secondary characters have produced a marked influence for good or ill on the religious and social life of Israel. These secondary characters will be considered according to periods of time in order to note the advance steps taken from century to century in attaining their racial development and maintaining their ideals.

1. During wilderness wanderings.
a. Jethro.

Going back to wilderness days, Jethro is preëminent as the counselor and instructor of Moses during that entire time. There was much for Moses to learn before he could safely undertake his great commission. He had to familiarize himself with wilderness life. As he became a shepherd in the employ of Jethro,² no doubt Jethro gave him much needed and valuable advice in readjusting himself to his new environment after years of luxurious life in the Egyptian palace. Jethro, apparently, was in sympathy with Moses's mission.³ He kept Moses's family while he was away and he returned them to Moses when he learned that he was "encamped at the Mount of God---. And Moses--did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent, and Moses told his father-in-law all that Jehovah had done---. And Jethro rejoiced---and offered a burnt offering and sacrifices for God."⁴

Smith's comment on this passage is suggestive and illuminating: "The fact of a foreigner's officiating at a sacrifice at which Aaron and the elders of Israel are only guests is so extraordinary and so much out of harmony with later Hebrew thought that we are compelled to see in this account a very ancient tradition. According to it the chief men in Israel are received into covenant with Jethro's God at a sacrificial meal. Moses is not men-

1. Cooper's "The Life and Work of Willbarn Tyndale," p. XIX, XX of Intro.

2. Ex. 3:1

3. Ex. 4:18

4. Ex. 2:2-3

tioned, probably because, being already in covenant with Yahweh, he acted as acolyte for his father-in-law. It is possible that in the original account he was stated to be a pupil of Jethro at this function, learning the proper ritual for the sacrifice to Yahweh. In any case, this narrative shows that Yahweh was formerly introduced to Israel by a Midianite priest. It is sometimes assumed that Jethro's admiration for Yahweh's power is admiration for the God of Israel. But in that case we should expect him to avow his conversion to this God before sacrificing to him, and even then he could hardly assume to act as priest. The only explanation is that Jethro was gratified at the evidence of his own God's superiority to all the gods."¹

There is no doubt as to Jethro's influence in administrative affairs. Moses acted upon Jethro's advice when he appointed minor judges or rulers to attend to the lesser affairs of government, and "he hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said."² Jethro's knowledge of local conditions proved so valuable that Moses begged him to go with them into the Land of Canaan: "Come with us and we will do thee good... Be to us instead of eyes,"³ but Jethro preferred to remain in his own country.

From this account, brief as it is, one is convinced that Jethro indelibly stamped some new religious and civil ideals upon the people who were ere long to become known as the Hebrew nation or the people of Israel. Jethro declared, "I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods", and he urged the appointment of civil rulers, "able men, who fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain."⁴

b. Balaam

Toward the close of the wilderness wanderings, another character, Balaam, became prominent in Hebrew history. The story of Balaam as found in Numbers 22-24 needs to be recalled in considerable detail in order to understand the impression he made upon not only the people of his day but also upon succeeding generations. He is in-

1. Smith's "The Religion of Israel", pp. 50, 51

2. Ex. 18: 24

3. Num. 10: 29f

4. Ex. 18: 11, 21

introduced as a man feared for his power with Jehovah. God talked with Balaam, asking him questions; God's anger was kindled against him for going to Balak; God put words in Balaam's mouth and made it very evident that He was lenient to the iniquities of Jacob whom He had brought out of Egypt.¹ But notwithstanding all this intimacy between Balaam and Jehovah at this time, Balaam became known through all later generations as the man who loved the hire of wrong-doing. Indeed, his name became a synonym for the basest methods of procuring personal gain. The Balak episode occurred in the period of time when the Israelites were definitely moving toward the Land of Canaan. They had passed the borders of the Edomites and now the Moabites' scouts had reported their approach to Moabite territory.

Consternation reigned in the encampment of the Moabites in the plains beyond the Jordan at Jericho. The strange folk were moving again and coming their way! For months now, marvelous tales of the restless Israelites had circulated the conversation throughout the borders of Moab. The early story that had seeped up from the south concerning the conflict between Arad, the Canaanite, and the Israelites had not disturbed the Moabites, except as it proved an interesting and exciting item of news. The Dead Sea had separated them from the scene of action with Arad - but not so the more recent negotiations of these Israelites with the Edomites. That was of more interest, for that came nearer home. The Edomite territory stretched just south of the land of the Moabites, so that what took place in one country was of great concern to the other.

The Moabites began to feel the effect of the news of these new people. They dimly remembered that their fathers or their grandfathers had told them of the hordes of Israelites who had for many generations been slaves in Egypt and who had finally broken away from their serfdom and had crossed the Red Sea through supernatural intervention of their

1. Num. 22: 9; 22: 22; 22: 38; 23: 21; 23: 22

God, Jehovah.

But now the travellers along the caravan route through Moab were telling how these people were moving, so eager, so desirous to pass through the country of the Edomites, just to the south of Moab. Had they succeeded? Ah! there were some good stories about their attempts to get the better of the Edomites! No doubt the wiseacres of Moab had many a joke over the shrewdness of the Edomites. They did just right, the Edomites did! The story ran that the Israelites had asked to pass through the Edomite country and that they had promised not to molest the vineyards nor to make free at the wells of water - but the Edomites would not take the risk of trusting their word. They had returned an unfavorable answer to the embassy from Israel and coupled it with a threat: "Thou shalt not pass through me, lest I come out with an sword against thee" (Nur. 20:18). The Israelites pleaded: "Let us keep to your highways. We will turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. We will pay for all drinking water used either by us or by our cattle. Let us just walk through, we beg you." But the Edomites flatly refused and, moreover, put up such a vigorous show of a fight that the Israelites retreated. This necessitated making a long detour to the south and thence to the east of Edom. But, much to the concern of the Moabites, these Israelites had not settled down in the land to the east of Moab - they had moved on, even to the borders of the land of the Moabites!

The fright of their people was still fresh in mind when an embassy of the strangers came to their elders to ask the same privileges they had asked of the Edomites. These Israelites declared they were on the way to a land which was to be given them by their God, Jehovah. They seemed civil and peaceable enough and they promised to pay for all extra privileges and not to molest anything by the way - but one could never tell what would happen if once they got a foothold in the land - therefore the elders of Moab decided to follow the lead of the Edomites and to refuse positively any passage across their territory. There could not be much courage in these people, the Moabites concluded, for instead of fighting it out, man-fashion, they again made a long detour to the east, passed the Moabite country and proceeded on to the very northern boundary on the Arnon. (Num. 21:13)

Then things began to happen. When the Israelites sent a request

to pass quietly through the land of the Amorites, King Sihon, not only refused but he brought his army forward and gave battle! Doubtless he knew how meekly they had submitted to the dictates of the Edomites and the Moabites and therefore he felt that it would be an easy thing to put them to flight. But when attacked, the Israelites showed remarkable courage. They were well organized. They had a good leader and they swept the land like wild-fire between the Arnon and the Jabbok - and even beyond to the Yarmuk. In the history of the oldest inhabitant, no such sweeping victories had ever been witnessed. It was not strange, perhaps, that the unwalled cities had fallen before them, but many of the cities in this territory had high walls and they were fortified and their gates were heavily barred, even these cities, sixty of them, had fallen, one after another, as if built of cardboard! And the cruelty of the Israelites! All the inhabitants were put to the sword! The women and the children were as mercilessly slain as were the men. Even the capital, Heshbon had fallen! Then the Moabites were cut to the quick by a snatch of a taunt song, sung at Heshbon but containing a threat to the Moabites:

"Come ye to Heshbon;

Let the city of Sihon be built and established:

For a fire has gone out of Heshbon,

A flame from the city of Sihon:

It hath devoured Ar of Moab,

The lords of the high places of the Arnon.

Woe to thee, Moab!

Thou art undone, O people, of Chemosh;

He hath given his sons as fugitives,

And his daughters into captivity,

Unto Sihon of the Amorites.

We have shot at them; Heshbon has perished even unto Dibon,

And we have laid waste even unto Nophah,

Which reacheth unto Medeba." (Num. 21:27-30)

After the series of victories about Heshbon, the Israelites went north to Bashan - wonderful grazing country up there - and they attacked and conquered Og, the giant who slept on an iron bedstead thirteen and a half feet long and six feet wide. After this, the Israelites settled down for awhile, and the Moabites had begun to breathe easily when word came that the restless strangers

were again on the move! Like grasshoppers they spread themselves over the plain above the Arnon, the northern boundary of Moab. In orderly array they stretched their tents by the thousands on the east of the Jordan, opposite Jericho. There was no more joking in the camps of the Moabites. Balak, their king, held many a counsel of war, and daily the situation grew more alarming. Scouts climbed the heights and brought back word of the endless array of tents to the north. Fresh in their ears were the terrible tales of the slaughter of the Amorites. Bolts and bars and walls of masonry were no protection against the Israelites.

After sleepless nights of anxiety, Balak, the son of Zippor, became inspired with a brilliant idea. His counselors agreed that he had hit upon a novel plan and upon one that gave promise of solving their problem. As Balak said: "The Israelites are too much for me; their multitudes would lick up" all that pertained to Moab "as an ox licketh up the grass" (Num. 22:4). Nothing less than the supernatural would avail. Balak had conceived how it might be possible to lay hold on the help of God - even Israel's God, Jehovah! Wide-eyed and open-mouthed the elders listened as Balak recounted the fame of "Balaam, the son of Beor, who lived in Pethor which is by the River" - probably the River Euphrates, (Num. 22:5). The spot light on this bit of information revealed the fact that Balaam was not enlisted in, nor had he personal acquaintance with, the group of the Chosen People, even though he had lived, perhaps, near the place from whence Abraham had migrated and he certainly knew and worshipped Israel's God. This section of country was noted for its diviners, and Balaam was the most famous soothsayer of the day, very likely a professional, who had strange power with Jehovah. Balak was confident that Balaam could be hired to use that power to the advantage of the Moabites and to the great discomfort of the Israelites. The story as it is given is a trifle confusing, for it is a mosaic put together from two sources - the author of the southern Judean history and that of the northern Ephraimite history. This story had made such an impression on the people of its day that it was related far and wide and written in the annals of both the north and the south. The southern bards always related their stories in a vivid style, using concrete terms, adding here and there a touch of the supernatural, for angels were frequently present, and it is not unusual to find them and animals. The northern writer was more reserved. The two stories, however,

...though they differ in details. Both emphasized the importance of Balaam and of his power with Jehovah. The name of Balaam was spoken with awe. He worshipped Jehovah! He was a being apart, a diviner, altogether above the ordinary individual. He was reckoned as a spiritual man, a man, as it were, who flashed a light that was seen over vast stretches of wilderness darkness.

A much abridged account of the Judean story follows: Balak sent to Num. 22) Balaam, saying: Behold there is a people come out from Egypt: behold they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed and he whom thou cursest is cursed... And Balaam sent reply, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah, my God, to do less or more." But Balaam went to Balak, riding upon his ass. The ass acted strangely - once turning out of the road, once crushing Balaam's foot against a wall, once lying down, and finally telling Balaam that he had been saving his life by avoiding an unseen adversary with a drawn sword. But eventually the abused beast carried Balaam safely to Balak. Then a series of offerings are made to Jehovah - Balaam sees the rows of the tents of the Israelites and when he opens his mouth it is always to bless, instead of to curse, the Israelites. Balak gets more and more angry, changes positions so that Balaam can see less and less of the Israelites - but apparently to no avail, and the story appears to leave Balak in despair and Balaam true to his high ideals.

But a later chapter tells a disgraceful story of the Israelites eating and bowing down to the gods of the Moabites and "playing the harlot with the daughters of Moab." A terrible punishment takes place - the guilty men of Israel are put to death, a battle ensues between Israel and Moab, the Moabites are beaten and among the slain, Balaam is mentioned. So he had been staying in the camp of Balak!

And what shall we conclude about Balaam? When we were first introduced to him, we thought we had found a man of superior spiritual attainment. A crisis came to his life when Balak called him to the Arnon. That gave him the "opportunity for immediate contact with God's people - for close intercourse with God himself, and thus for attaining that fulness of prophetic gifts and dignity to which

he would seem to have aspired. But he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and strove, for the sake of them, to break away from the lines of conduct distinctly prescribed to him by God. When his perversity was at length overcome by irresistible influence from on high, and the gold and honors of Balak seemed to be finally lost, he became reckless and desperate, as if in defiance, counseled the evil strategem by which he hoped to compass indirectly that ruin of God's people which he had withheld from working otherwise. He thus, like Ahithophel, in Old Testament history, and Judas, in the New Testament, set in motion a series of events which involved his own destruction... Yet this man had uttered prophecies which are among the noblest and most striking in Scripture."¹

But the New Testament adds several illuminating passages: "But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing; men that count it pleasure to revel in the day-time, spots and blemishes, reveling in your deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unstedfast souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing; forsoaking the right way, they are gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire or wrong-doing; but he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spake with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water, and mists driven by the storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved."² And the message to the church in Pergamum contains these words: "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication."³

1. Abbott's "Dictionary of Religious Knowledge", p. 29

2. II Pet. 2:12-17

3. Rev. 2:14

Supposing Balaam had gone to the Israelites' camp instead of remaining in the Moabites' camp, when he first realized that God was going to bless them? He might have become one of their honored prophets. As it is, his name has come down through thirty centuries as a name for execration - the synonym for high ideals that have been bedrugged in the mire of bribery and corruption. Like Tito, in George Eliot's "Romola", a youth who attracted all at first, but as time passed, who steadily degenerated because he followed his selfish impulses, so Balaam, because of his love for gold, brought down upon his own head the ruined structure of his soul's achievement.

3. Caleb

In the wilderness days and long afterward, Caleb was distinguished as a faithful champion of Jehovah's cause. He was chosen to represent the tribe of Judah on the eventful excursion to spy out the Land of Canaan, to note the type of inhabitants, their cities and strongholds, the condition of the soil, whether tillable, pasture, or wooded, and all other points of interest.¹ Of the twelve chosen, all, no doubt, men of initiative and courage, only two, Caleb and Joshua, left records which are viewed with pride. The twelve accomplished their mission and returned in safety, but two alone came back undaunted by the sights they saw and their hardships undergone, while ten returned with weakened knees, fearful hearts, and tongues that wagged concerning fortified cities and a race of giants so huge the spies looked like grasshoppers in comparison. Open-mouthed the Israelites listened to these frightful stories. They were wrought upon until the whole congregation burst into loud wails and lamentations: "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would

1. Numbers 13

that we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore doth Jehovah bring us unto this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will be a prey: were it not better for us to return into Egypt?"¹

Caleb and Joshua vehemently affirmed that the land was a good one, that under the protection of Jehovah there was nothing to fear, yet in spite of their courageous and optimistic attitude, had not the "glory of Jehovah (opportunistically) appeared in the tent of meeting", the people would have stoned their two bravest and most courageous men in the group.² For the lack of faith of the Israelites in general, it was decreed that the wanderings in the wilderness be continued until all of that generation, over twenty years of age, except Caleb and Joshua, should have laid down their lives. "As I live, saith Jehovah, surely as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, that have murmured against me, surely ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore that I would make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun... And your children shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years."³ And so it was. Later on, Caleb was especially mentioned as meriting Jehovah's favor and Joshua became Moses' successor.⁴ Caleb was given the allotment of southern Judah, including Hebron, for his inheritance, and there he added to his possessions in the conquest of Debir, at which time he offered his daughter, Achsah, as a prize to the victorious captain.⁵ Caleb made a name for himself and his posterity. He added to the sum total of Israelitish worthy characters by accepting imposed responsibilities and by portraying a true spirit of courage and optimism.

1. Num. 14:2, 3

2. Num. 14:8-10

3. Num. 14:28-30, 33

4. Josh. 14:13, 14 and Deut. 34:9

5. Judg. 1:11-13

2. During the conquest of Canaan.

a. Rahab the Harlot.

During the conquest of Canaan there were several exceptionally interesting people that might properly be placed in the category of secondary characters, but four only will be so listed: Rahab, Deborah, Gideon, and Ruth.

Of all the women - or men, for that matter - who lived in Jericho in the twelfth century B.C., Rahab alone is known to us by name, and this is due to the fact that she alone in that city was one to discern the signs of the times. Jericho, which must have been old, even in Rahab's day, has left no records of its victories or defeats, except as it came in conflict with the people of Jehovah. Rahab had a reputation among the city dwellers of Jericho and Rahab has been talked about during every generation since her day. Pious people have tried to explain away the epithet attached to her name, and have called her an "inn keeper", but people wise in the lore of the East declare there were no inns in her day. Whatever kind of house she kept, however, was well-known and travellers were directed to it for food and lodging.

From what we know of Rahab, she must have been naturally intelligent; she could think for herself and act on her own good judgment. She must have been a good judge of other people - she was not easily taken in by waverers who came her way. Probably she was good company and good looking. She impresses one with her initiative, with love and oversight of her family, for she took care of the whole group - father, mother, brothers, and sisters - in the days of the siege, although they had apparently cast her adrift before that time. She was thrifty and a good provider, for her housetop was covered with flax, laid in order, to be prepared for the weaving the linen for her household.¹ She was quick-witted. She realized the danger of her guests and knew where to conceal them quickly.² She could deceive and lie readily in a good cause without changing color.³ According to present-day, orthodox standards, deceit and lying are sinful, but they were not so severely condemned according to the standards of her day. It was a commendable bit of shrewdness to be sharper witted than her opponents - anything was fair to win one's cause in love and war. But would a primary character, like Joshua, have stooped to such trickery? Perhaps not,

1. Josh. 2:3

2. Josh. 2:4, 6

3. Josh. 2:4, 5

yet note that it was Joshua who sent the spies into Jericho and that the Israelites have placed Rahab on the honor roll of their worthies along with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. There must be some good reason for this high honor, for unworthy people are not thus revered for thousands of years. We have already seen that Balaam, the prophet, has been for this length of time a by-word for all that is contemptible. Let us consider the story of Rahab thoughtfully in order to discover why she has been held in such esteem.

As usual, the story is brief and we are justified in reading certain conclusions between the lines. In the first place, we must dwell upon the statement that Rahab had heard of the Israelites long before she saw the two spies. The story of the crossing of the Red Sea had been current for forty years. It was a marvelous tale and the point of the story had not been lost: "JEHOVAH dried the waters of the Red Sea for the Israelites."¹ Do you surmise that Rahab wished to know more about this powerful, wonder-working God of Israel? Then things, near at hand, had been happening in recent days - unbelievable victories over King Sihon and the giant, King Og, whose cities, walled to heaven, had been delivered into the hands of these strange worshippers of Jehovah - nothing seemed impossible for them.² With bated breath, newsmongers had rehearsed over and over the accounts of the victories of the people of God. Not a child in Jericho but had heard the dreadful stories. Men, women, and children had perished, whole cities of them. Rahab was convinced that there was no God like Jehovah - it was His might that prevailed. She frankly admitted that the hearts of the citizens of Jericho fairly melted - every semblance of stability of purpose cozed out like thin sap - not a particle of spirit was left in the most valiant of these weak-spirited mud-dabblers.³ For, as Smith says: "Her people seem never to have been distinguished for bravery; and, indeed, in that climate, how could they? Inervated by great heat --- it was impossible they could be warriors, or anything but irrigators, paddlers in water and soft earth."⁴ Hence it was that the Israelites

1. Josh. 2:10

2. Num. 21:21-35

3. Josh. 2:9

4. Smith's "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land", p. 268.

had won Jericho before ever they crossed the Jordan, ^{but} as they did not know it, they sent two spies to study the fortifications, to take note of means of defense, and to learn of the courage of the city dwellers.

Jericho did not cover a great area. I have stood on the mound of its ancient ruins which is just a mole on the furrowed cheek of the Jordan valley. Excavations have been made in this very mound and the walls, made of sun-dried bricks have been traced on three sides, making certain their extent and thickness. Evidences of fire, which centuries do not efface, are to be seen, confirming the biblical story that the city was burned. As is the custom, even today, the walled cities were crowded to the limit. Houses were huddled together so that they were raised even on the city walls, which were from four to ten feet thick in Jericho. These elevated houses were built wider than the walls so that they projected out on each side like over-hanging balconies. I saw such dwellings in Damascus, shared by families of human beings and by animals. One house was made beautiful with flowering vines and shrubs growing from pots of earth. In such a house Rahab lived above the city scum, in the purer air on the city wall, in the brilliant sunlight.

One wonders what she thought when the two spies came to her home for dinner. It was no new thing to receive strangers. Jericho was used to all sorts of travellers from the four corners of the world. But these two men impressed Rahab with their significance and worth. No doubt they had been loafing about the street corners all day, listening to street talk but asking few questions. The location of all the gates and the means for fastening them would be specially noted. The day had almost gone and they had seemingly attracted no unpleasant attention. Night was coming on and they had gone to Rahab's house for supper and lodging. Suddenly Rahab is made aware that royal messengers are climbing the steps to her house on the wall. How did she manage to hurry the two strangers up to the roof, cover them, obliterate all traces of the disturbance to the orderly-laid flax stalks, and be back in season to meet, without a flutter, the king's agents?

"Deliver your guests", said the men, "for they are spies."¹

"Spies! were those men spies?" Rahab asks with innocent concern. "Surely, they have been here, but while I was busy with my house-keeping, they must have slipped out. Now I think of it, they disappeared about the time of the closing of the city gates. Probably they saw to it to get out before the gates were shut for the night. Hurry after them - they cannot have gone far." And the men went out, hot-footedly, in a vain pursuit, as we very well know.²

Rahab was soon in conference with the two men on the roof. She confessed to them her admiration for Jehovah, their God. She was certain Jericho would fall, as had fallen the cities of Gashan and of the Ammonites. She longed to live, and not she alone but to have with her all of her loved family also. She pleaded for their lives.

"I have dealt kindly with you. I have not delivered you to the capture of my king. Now spare me and my father, my mother, my brothers, and my sisters. Do not deliver us to death. Give me a pledge of good faith to preserve us in the day when Jehovah delivers this city into your hands."³

The spies solemnly swore on their lives to spare her and her family if she did not break faith with them. A sign was agreed upon, a scarlet thread was to be suspended from her window. All her family must keep within her house - the spies would not be responsible for any one outside. The oaths were repeated. Rahab promised not to tell their business and the spies promised to spare all within her house from the window of which should dangle the scarlet thread. She gave her parting advice: "Go to the mountain over yonder" - later associated with the Temptation of Jesus - "keep in hiding three days, then make your way back to your people." She let them down from her window, by means of a cord, and she bound the scarlet thread in the window.⁴

Rahab must have had persuasiveness and authority, for her family entered her home, kept faith with Rahab's contract, and

1. Josh. 2:2, 8

2. Josh. 2:4-7

3. Josh. 2:12f

4. Josh. 2:15, 21

awaited the outcome. Days passed and Rahab kept watch toward the Jordan from her housetop. In time what she had expected came. The valley was filled with tents - the Israelites had crossed the Jordan! The inhabitants of Jericho were terror-stricken. Again the waters had been parted by the God who watched over the interests of the Israelites. Strange ceremonies had taken place, an account of which had reached the ears within the walls of Jericho. Very soon the city of Jericho was shut up as securely as bolts and bars could make her. No one ventured outside.

One morning, early, the city people went white with terror at the sights and sounds they saw and heard. Soldiers advanced to the city walls, followed by priests bearing the symbol of Jehovah's presence - the ark - other priests followed blowing blasts on rams' horns, followed by a host of people. The whole procession slowly marched around the city wall. With bated breath, with trembling limbs, with terror-stricken faces the people awaited the end - but it did not come! The procession moved on! The day and the night passed and all was well. But morning brought again the same procession. Surely now the end had come. Breathlessly they waited, but the procession trailed back to their own encampment after once circling the city walls. Nothing happened to the people inside the walls of Jericho. They were puzzled over the strange maneuvers of these strangers. What could they mean? A third day - and the same program was enacted. No harm done that day. Surely the Israelites must be crazy. Nothing to fear in them after all! But Rahab and her family held their tongues and waited, and the scarlet thread floated in the breeze from Rahab's window. A fourth day, a fifth day, and a sixth day. The strange processions, the strange blasts on the rams' horns, but no damage done to Jericho. Tension was gone, vigilance ceased, fear was well-nigh gone, amusement crept in. No one bothered about the gates any more. All were crowded on the wall to see the crazy acts of the strangers.

What went on behind Rahab's doors? How she must have argued in favor of Israel's God! How she must have rehearsed all the stories she had heard of the Israelites! How she must have expressed her faith in the two spies! How her younger brothers, true to boy nature, demanded to be out with other boys to see what was going on! When two, three, four, five, six days passed

and no calamity befell Jericho, how foolish they must have thought her! But Rahab did not lose faith - the scarlet thread still waved from her window. On the seventh day - did Rahab stand with her back to the door to keep her family in by main force? Whether or no, it is certain that the scarlet thread still waved triumphantly from Rahab's window, for RAHAB HAD KEPT FAITH !

Again the procession encircled the walls once - and once again - and again and again - even for seven times. Then a mighty shout went up, the priests blew lustily on their horns, pandemonium broke loose, and the next the people of Jericho knew, the Israelites were upon them! The slaughter had commenced! Confusion, shrieks, sob, groans - then an ominous silence! Rahab and her family remained within Rahab's house, and the scarlet thread swung from the window. A knock came at Rahab's door. Jehovah, Israel's God, had again given victory, and Jehovah's people had come to save Rahab. She and her family had kept faith. They were conveyed safely to the camp of the Israelites, and then Jericho was burned, totally destroyed, a "devoted" thing, and a curse was pronounced upon any one who ever rebuilt it.¹

Rahab was treated with great honor by the Israelites, because she hid the messengers and led them safely away. Her name was never allowed to pass into oblivion. In the genealogy given in Matthew, the first chapter, only five women are mentioned, and Rahab is one. She married a worthy Israelite named Salmon and their first born was Boaz, prosperous and honorable, who married Ruth, and they were the grandparents of David.² Eminent biblical critics think there is no mistake in this conclusion. Again, in Hebrews 11, that classic chapter on the heroes of faith, Rahab the harlot ranks as a shining example of faith and obedience and action, "having received the spies with peace." James, the practical, used Rahab's name to support his theory of the importance of good works: "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?"³

1. Josh. 6:24-26

2. Abbott's Dictionary of Religious Knowledge, p. 782

Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible", p. 782

Robertson's "Harmony of the Gospels", p. 260

3. James 2:25

Although Rahab has been branded through the centuries with the consequences of her early life before she knew a righteous God, yet, even such as she, when her chance of enlightenment came, embraced her opportunities and became numbered with the children of Jehovah, the wife of a leading Israelite, the mother of a noble son, the ancestress, if the records are rightly interpreted, of the Davidic line which culminated in the Divine Son of Mary.

The taking of Jericho was an entering wedge to the conquest of the country beyond the Jordan. As the pioneers of Israel advanced, step by step, they were forced to do frequent battle, usually against almost overwhelming odds in order "to have and to hold" a place for themselves in the new land. When the situation became extremely desperate, a "judge" arose to save them. Several judges came into prominence, but we shall make mention of but two, Deborah and Gideon, who delivered the Israelites from the extremely burdensome oppression of neighboring peoples. Deborah was a prophetess, yet she judged Israel. (Judg. 4:4)

b. Deborah

Among many worthy women no one is more worthy of the title of "Mother of Israel" than Deborah. Yet how little we know about her! The "distilled essence" of her life, however, is like a strong whiff of smelling salts, invigorating, reviving, and life-giving. Deborah was the great woman of her day, even in a time when the inferiority of women was commonly believed. Deborah had a husband, a man whose name would never have come down in history except for his good sense in becoming her husband. They lived in the hill country of Ephraim and their house, or tent, was distinguished because of the palm tree in the front yard. The house was not "famous", but people did not go here to see Lappidoth, they went to see his wife, Deborah, for she was a prophetess and she judged Israel. Never had the Israelites been so oppressed, never had the Canaanites been so bold. Heathen Canaanites all about them who not alone held the upper hand, they made life all but unbearable for the newcomers. Deborah sensed the situation. "Things were going from bad to worse and not a man dared raise the banner of revolt and strike for freedom. Forty thousand men in Israel, and not a shield or spear among them! Travel for the Israelites had ceased along the highways on account of the frequency of highway robbery and murder. The Israelites skulked along unfrequented byways and scuttled to cover, like so many rabbits, at the first intimation of danger. For twenty years the King of Canaan had "mightily oppressed" them, (Judg. 4:3)

As King Jabin had 900 chariots of iron, what could the unarmed Israelites do against his might? No doubt oppression meant more than paying the toll demanded by plunderers, pillagers, and highwaymen, it probably meant slavery for young men and young women, and what would fire the soul of a mother of Israel like the knowledge that her daughters were forced to a life of shame? At any rate, as tale after tale of distress came to Deborah's ears, while she sat under her palm tree, her blood began to boil and finally she, Deborah, a "mother of Israel AROSE" ! And things began to happen. When a woman like Deborah once gets thoroughly stirred to action, men are positively obliged to take part. Deborah succeeded in arousing sufficient spirit in the men folk to organize forces. She influenced Barak to lead these forces, if she would go along with him.

The central tribes responded as if called to interest so to do. But the tribes of Reuben, Dan, and Asher held aloof. Reuben wavered in the balance but finally settled down "by the water courses -- to hear the pinings for the flocks."¹ Gilead felt quite secure as the great separator, the Jordan river, intervened; and Dan and Asher were so interested in their own commercial enterprises that they left the central tribes to settle their own difficulties.

The cause was a righteous one. Deborah was sure it would be championed by Jehovah and she foresaw that the big strokes would be made by women, inspired by faith in, and loyalty to, Jehovah. The battlefield was the famous plain of Esdraelon, a vast level on which the war chariots of Canaan could ordinarily mow down their enemies as a machine cuts grass. By thousands the undrilled and unarmed Israelites gathered under Mount Tabor. Not all of these were loyal, however, for Heber, the Kenite, acted as spy in favor of the Canaanites.² Jabin's captain, Sisera, prepared his nine hundred war chariots, no doubt assuring himself of an easy victory and the complete annihilation of these troublesome new immigrants.

While the others concerned were making preparations, Deborah kept her eyes on the heavens. When every sign looked to her satisfaction, she called to Barak: "Up! for this is the day in which Jehovah hath delivered Sisera into thy hand. Is not Je-

1. Judges 5:16

2. Judges 4:11, 12

hovah gone out before thee?"¹ It would seem that He had, for the elements broke loose, the storm swept the plain, the noble Kishon overflowed its banks, the earth became so soft the chariot wheels stuck in the mud, the horses plunged and leaped and became unmanageable, and that ancient river, Kishon, swept all before it.² The Canaanites were utterly routed and the fatal blow of the hammer, wielded by Jael, the wife of the traitor Heber, closed the career of Sisera. Deborah had freed Israel from the oppression of the Canaanites.

Perhaps Deborah herself wrote that wonderful Ode - the greatest war song of the ages.³ No man, it seems to me, would have thought to urge the groups of women who went to the wells for water to rehearse these wondrous acts of Jehovah, or to have added the pathetic picture at the close of Sisera's mother watching through the lattice for the return of her loved son, the while reassuring herself and being reassured by her waiting-women, that Sisera tarried for the distribution of the spoil, for embroideries and for his choice of captive maidens! Surely that was why his chariot was so long in coming, why tarried so long the wheels of his chariot.⁴ The women of Israel knew what it was to wait for the ones who never returned and even in their exultation over this unprecedented victory, they could not forget the heartache of the hated enemy's mother. The intensity of racial feeling is strongly brought out in this episode of the Israelites.

Fowler says that from the historian's point of view, this song is the "most important document for the formative period of Israel."⁵ Genung is of the opinion that the Song of Deborah is "perhaps the earliest literary piece which as a whole can be taken as contemporaneous with the event" --- so that it "makes a convenient starting point alike in history and in literature, from which we can reckon both backwards and forwards."⁶ Genung places the date about 1250 B.C.; Professor Laura H. Wild

1. Judges 4:14

2. Judges 5:21

3. Gordon's "The Poets of the Old Testament", p 31

4. Judges 5:28

5. Fowler's "A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel" pp17, 18

6. Genung's "Guidebook to the Biblical Literature", p5

places it in the tenth century B.C.¹ At this early date, therefore, we learn through the Song of Deborah that deep emotions were capable of being spontaneously expressed in language and style unsurpassed since that glorious day. This ode is the work of a great poet and a genius, whoever he or she may have been.

Gideon. From the heights of inspired poetry we next turn to the thrilling narrative in the days of the Judges when the Midianites were especially troublesome. The account states that the Israelites sowed fields with grain but before it could be harvested the Midianites swooped down, as "locusts for multitude", reaped the grain, loaded it on their camels and rode off in a cloud of dust. They also gathered in the flocks and herds of the Israelites so there was left "neither sheep nor ox nor ass".² Hence the Israelites became exceedingly grieved and concealed themselves in caves and dens and strongholds.³

One young man, Gideon by name, had succeeded in reaping his field of wheat and hiding it in an underground winepress. Under great difficulties he commenced beating out the grain by hand, a slow and dusty process in his cramped quarters. His heart was not within him over his enforced limitations and the oppression of his enemies. Very likely he dreamed of some hero who would arise to smite the Midianites, hip and thigh, but that hero had not arrived and the flail rose and fell until Gideon all but choked in the dust. As the blow fell and the flail came down, a voice was heard saying, "Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor!" It was a startling thought, more than Gideon could sense for a time. He questioned the ways of Jehovah and Jehovah answered by definitely telling him to "Go in this thy night and save Israel from the hand of the Midianites."⁴ Gideon heard the call, but as he was not sure that he interpreted it aright, he demanded signs to confirm it, which were given. When all things pointed to him as the chosen leader, Gideon set out on his mission.

His first venture was in connection with his own home. His father

1. Wild's "A Literary Guide to the Bible", p. 48

2. Judges 6:3, 4

3. Judges 6:2

4. Judge. 6:14

had built an altar to Baal and had erected an Asherah beside it. Under the cover of darkness, Gideon and ten of his servants demolished the heathen structures, erected an altar to Jehovah and sacrificed an ox thereon. In the morning a hue and cry was raised by the worshippers of Baal and things looked dark for Gideon. But Gideon's father upheld his son and told his neighbors to leave the matter to Baal to avenge. Gideon must have been encouraged, for the next we learn about him, he is planning an attack on the Midianites.

There were many details in the plan which Gideon had in mind to the conflict with the Midianites. Thirty-two thousand people responded to his call, but he did not know how to manage so many. Moreover, it was evident that many were lacking in courage and Gideon told all the "fearful and trembling" to go home. Two-thirds of the recruits decamped! But the remaining ten thousand were still too many. The selective process went on until only three hundred were left, men who had proved their alertness and vigor and enthusiasm.¹ But Gideon, on the eve of battle, needed further encouragement, and he was bid to take his sword, torch, and slings down to the camp of the Midianites and listen to the camp-fire talk. On the outskirts of the huge encampment, a Midianite was relating a dream. In his dream he saw a cake of barley rolling into their camp which overturned a tent! An insignificant little cake of barley actually turning a tent upside down! What could it mean? One of the dreamer's comparisons in an awe-struck voice declared it portended victory for Gideon. "This is nothing! Have ye the sword of Gideon... Into his hand God hath delivered Midian, and all the host."² The victory was won. Already the Midianites were fearful and it only took the smashing of a few pitchers, the flashing of a few torches, and some mighty shouts to completely demoralize the Midian host and to send them flying in a panic across the ford of Jordan.

Like many another hero who has met a difficult situation, Gideon had to meet the severe criticism of those who had not been the spot lights in the movement. The feelings of the men of Ephraim had to be soothed and Gideon showed his diplomacy in dealing with them. Gideon continued his conquests - his fighting blood was boiling - and he inflicted cruelly severe punishment on cities which gave him no aid. Gideon became the hero of his day, the man of right who was worthy to be called a king. His admiring countrymen besought him to become a

1. Judg. 7:3-7

2. Judg. 7:8-14

kind, but he refused, saying, "Jehovah shall rule over me."¹ He did, however, accept large gifts of the spoils with which he made an "ephod" that, according to the story, did not add to the luster of his renown for "it became a snare unto Gideon and to his house." But the Midianites were subdued, they held up their heads no more, and Israel had rest for forty years.²

d. Ruth

From the exploits of war and bloodshed, it is delightful to turn to a "charming idyll or early prose narrative"³ fragrant with homely virtues which made life sweet and wholesome. The book of Ruth is placed after the book of Judges and some scholars claim that it was originally part of Judges.⁴ Genung calls it the "daintiest of love idylls", quoting Goethe, and he says "it fits without trimming into every age",⁵ but the fact that the Hebrews placed it in the third division of their writings "is a silent indication of its lateness."⁶ Fowler thinks that the nucleus of the story is early, but that its present form is "a product of the age of priestly reform."⁷ Whatever its date may be, it is a classic that has proved of universal interest during centuries of time. It records the every day doings of people in their ordinary work of life: their love for home, their friendships, their business relations, such as buying and selling property, and their social customs at the time of births, marriages, and deaths, just the things that interest every one of us.

Disregarding the question of the date of the composition of the book, let us assume that in some period before the days of the monarchy there lived one of the best loved of biblical women. For the story of Ruth, the Moabitess, the faithful friend, is one of the most beautiful, the most fascinating, and the most illuminating in all literature.

Hard times had come to Bethlehem-Judah, for there was a famine in the land. Most of the people made the best of the situation without leaving the country, but there was one man, Elimelech, who set out with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, for the land of Moab. But things did not go well in the new land. In a

1. Judges 8:25

2. Judges 8:27, 28

3. Byle's "Canon of the Old Testament," p.181

4. Ibid., p.142

5. Genung's "Guidebook to the Biblical Literature", p.417

6. Ibid., p.417

7. Fowler's "A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel," p.310

short time, Elimelech died and the two sons, after having married heathen girls, despised Moabites, also died. In less than ten years in the land of Moab, Naomi had lost her husband and her two sons. Do you wonder that Naomi began to think it was time to get back to her own people and her own country? She had heard that prosperity had again come to the home land, and I imagine that she yearied for a chance to worship in the old-time fashion and to feel that she was with the people of her own faith.

One day, another party set out for a long journey. This time there was a heart-broken woman in middle life and two forlorn young women, setting their faces toward Bethlehem-Judah. On the way, it apparently occurred to Naomi that these girls, who had become dear to her, would not be welcomed in the land of Judah. There were heart-breaking sobs during which Orpah, very reluctantly, kissed her mother-in-law and turned her face back toward the land of Moab. Not so, Ruth. Her reply to Naomi was a most unhesitating declaration of affection, unsurpassed in any literature.

"Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return ~~from~~ following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God; and where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." (Ruth 8:16,17). From that time on, we have a record of a friendship which has never been surpassed among women. Neither the world nor the field of literature has any other such account. When we speak of the friendships of women, we can only say they are something like the friendship of Ruth for Naomi. What makes it so unusual? It was a friendship that stood the acid test of every relation that could be put upon it. It stood the test of the intimate relation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, even when the daughter-in-law belonged to a despised foreign race; it was greater than blood ties and love of country, for Ruth left all these to go with Naomi; it held through hard work and poverty - many friendships have done that - but it was also beautiful in prosperity; and best of all, it was not jealous of a grandmother's love and devotion when the baby came to the home. But when Ruth made her great decision, what did it seem to promise for Ruth? Nothing at all but the care of a poor old woman. To my mind it speaks volumes for the character of Mahlon, for had he not been kind to Ruth, would she have left all to care for his aged mother and have accepted his God for her God?

3. During the period of the kingdom.

a. During David's day

(1) Jonathan

As Ruth was the ancestress of David, it is fitting that we should next consider some people during his day - secondary characters - such as Jonathan, the ideal friend; Benaiah, the man of valor; Ittai, the man of devotion; Hushai, the man of loyalty; and Rizpah, the pattern of maternal devotion.

If one should search the records of all times and climes, no more loyal friend among men could be found than Jonathan, the prince, who was willing to take second place in the presence of his friend, David.¹ Jonathan was heir to a throne, but his love for David counted far more than to become a king. Jonathan was loyal to his father, King Saul, and fought to his death in his cause, yet he even dared to set aside his father's wishes in order to befriend David. Jonathan's soul was knit to the soul of David and at the peril of position and even life itself, he wrought for his friend's interests.² For David, it meant deliverance from the hands of assassins, it meant support and a safe-guard. For Jonathan, the reward was the transforming love which transfused his soul and made each sacrifice a delight. Jonathan placed his all in the scales when David's friendship tipped the other end of the scale's beam. Any nation might call itself proud to have reared a man with a love like Jonathan's.

(2) Benaiah

All the world applauds a man of valor, especially one who performs feats that are unusual. Benaiah was one of the bravest: he put to death, without a tremor, apparently, the mighty Joab, the cringing prince, Adonijah, and the scoffer, Shimei. But those things were all in the day's work for the leader of the king's bodyguard. Benaiah won his fame by two or three rather unusual exploits. An Egyptian, a powerful man, armed with a long spear, pitted his might against Benaiah. Benaiah was armed only with a staff, but so skilful was he that he managed to ward off the thrusts of the spear, and finally to pluck the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and put him to death with his own weapon. He also slew two sons of Ariel of Moab, which ap-

1. I Sam. 23:17

2. I Sam. 18:1

peared to have been something above the ordinary.

But the spectacular exploit of Benaiah that looms large in the annals, has to do with the slaying of a lion which was lurking in a pit. This deed was accomplished during the time when snow was on the ground. Under ordinary circumstances that might not appear so remarkable a performance, but consider that this was before the time of modern weapons. It called for a hand to hand encounter with a beast in a pit which might not be lighted except by the fiery glow of the savage brute's eyes. In the winter season, hunger drove the wild animals to the outskirts of the city where they took their toll of stray animals, children, and even adults. Perhaps this beast had occasioned the death of several. At any rate, the lion was a serious menace, and doubtless many attempts had been made to kill him, but he held his own in a certain pit. To add to the difficulty, a snow storm came on, and snow, with its accompanying cold, almost paralyzes the inhabitants in that country. They shrivel and shrink from the cold and lose all initiative and huddle inside over a brazier of coals. But even with all these handicaps, Benaiah, the valiant, disappeared into a dark pit to meet a hungry lion. The crowd outside must have listened with bated breath while the struggle of contest went on. We can almost hear the blood-curdling roar of the beast and the shout of the man as they met for the death grapple. This is not only dramatic, it is heroic. No wonder Benaiah achieved a "name" among the thirty "mighty men"!¹

(8) Ittai

Ittai, the man of devotion, met his supreme test during a rebellion. Absalom's conspiracy against his father, King David, was strong, -so strong that David felt obliged to flee from Jerusalem. More and more the people increased in Absalom's favor, even some of David's trusted followers, like Ahithophel, deserted him. Ittai was a foreigner and an exile, called the Gittite, from a city of the Philistines.² He belonged to David's bodyguard. Even David felt that it was requiring too great a sacrifice to expect Ittai

1. II Sam. 23: 20-28

2. II Sam. 15: 19

to accompany him. Therefore David said to him, "Wherefore goest thou also with us? Return, and abide with the king; for thou art a foreigner, and also an exile; return to thine own place. Where-as thou comest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us, seeing I go whither I may? Return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee."¹

Ittai's reply is not so poetic as Ruth's reply to Naomi, but it is the same in substance and deserves to be engraved on our minds as an example of whole-hearted devotion, noble self-sacrifice, and pure disinterested purpose: "As Jehovah liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, even there also will thy servant be."²

(4) Hushai

Hushai had for many years been the loyal counselor of David.³ But the time came when Hushai's loyalty was put to the extreme test. As in the case of Ittai, there had to be a choice made between the feeble old king and the energetic, attractive, young Absalom. Hushai chose to follow David into exile, but David asked him to go back to Jerusalem to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel and to keep David informed as to the trend of events. Hushai undertook the difficult task. He learned what was going on in Jerusalem, then reported his conclusions to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests. A maid servant was employed as a go-between. The two trusted messengers dwelt at En-rogel, "so that they might not be seen to come into the city." These messengers carried Hushai's word to David.⁴ Moreover, Hushai defeated the counsel of Ahithophel to such purpose that "when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and set him home, unto his city, and set his house in order, and hanged himself."⁵ Thus we see that David's confidence in Hushai had not been misplaced. Hushai had been assigned a dangerous and delicate task, yet he took his life in his hand and did his duty, because he was absolutely loyal to king David.

1. II Sam. 23:20-23

4. II Sam. 17:15-17

2. II Sam. 15:21

5. II Sam. 17:23

3. II Sam. 15:22-37

(5) Rizpah

But the men of David's day cannot carry off all the palms accorded to the heroic and virtuous. It is true that the women were not often brought to public attention, for the most of them, in the seclusion of their own homes, wrought nothing spectacular, but the historians of Israel were moved to speak of a few women whose deeds had stirred the emotions and wrung the applause from the bystanders. Nor was it always the high-born who did the unusual. Was it Michal, King Saul's daughter, or Rizpah, the concubine, who proved heroic? Michal, the wife of the popular hero, David, was brave enough to defy her father and save her husband, but when David was driven away from court, she was given in marriage to another - a man of not enough consequence to be mentioned except as the husband of a king's daughter - but it is recorded that he loved her and that five sons were born to them. Years passed and circumstances were shaping themselves for David to become king over all Israel. To make his position more legitimate and more secure, it seemed necessary to have Saul's daughter once more in the royal household, so that the edict went forth that Michal must return to David. The weeping husband followed until ordered back home.¹ Did the daughter of Saul, the sister of Jonathan, distinguish himself in such a crisis and become heralded as a woman of heroic caliber? No. It was Rizpah, known as King Saul's concubine. Rizpah must have been an unusual woman. After the death of Saul, she became a member of King Ishbosheth's royal household and, because of her, Ishbosheth lost the much needed support of his able army general, Abner.² It was this way: When Ishbosheth inherited his father's crown and royal family, the power behind the throne was Abner. Ishbosheth accused Abner of making advances to Rizpah. Abner stoutly denied these treasonable charges. Whether the accusations were true or not, the outcome was that Abner at

1. II Sam. 8: 14; 16

2. II Sam. 8: 6-12

once entered upon negotiations with King David to turn the kingdom over to him. Ishbosheth fell under the hands of assassins, and the way was open for David to complete arrangements for becoming king of all Israel.

Soon after this occurred the incident which brought Rizpah's devotion to public notice so that for nearly 3000 years she has been cited as the acme of maternal love. As long as Hebrew scriptures remain, her self-sacrificing devotion will not be forgotten. The situation was this: a terrible drouht had been in progress for three years. David showed his belief in the teaching of his time when he accepted the Gibeonites' explanation of the cause of the disaster. They declared that it was due to an act of King Saul who had broken the treaty made by Joshua with them, for Saul had put some Gibeonites to death. Therefore David asked the Gibeonites what atonement he should make them. The Gibeonites replied: "It is no matter of silver or gold between us and Saul, or his house; neither is it for us to put any man to death in Israel." (II Sam. 21:4) Well, David inquired, "What do you want?" They then demanded that seven of Saul's descendants be delivered to them. David, it seems, worked off a little personal revenge in his selection of the seven, for five were sons of his own wife, Michal, which were born to her while she was the wife of Ariel, and two were the sons of Rizpah and King Saul. The Gibeonites hanged these seven men at the beginning of the barley season. Then occurs the unparalleled account of maternal love as displayed by Rizpah. One verse only is devoted to the story, but could a whole chapter convey more meaning? "And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread for her upon the rock from the beginning of harvest until water poured upon them from heaven, and she suffered neither the birds of the heavens to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night." (II Sam. 21:10). Day after day, picture this beautiful woman growing gaunt and weather-beaten as she frantically drove away the huge vultures and the hordes of carrion crows that had gathered from far and near to feast on the decaying bodies, swinging in the breeze. A more gruesome task never befell the lot of a woman, and it was self-imposed. Alone, day after day, in constant watchfulness under circumstances to drive one insane, this hitherto secluded woman of kings' harems, defied custom, court



regulations, the elements, and the animal kingdom. Picture the terror of the nights when the startled woman was aroused by prowling beasts, seeking a nightly feast! Rizpah had been unjustly deprived of her stalwart sons to satisfy a superstitious whim. They had been done to their death but they should not become the food of beasts nor birds. The wild beasts would have to consume Rizpah's own life's blood before they could get a chance at the rotting flesh which swung from the gibbets. At length the story of her marvelous devotion reached David, and we are glad to note it so touched him that he made what amends he could by having all the dead of Saul's family removed to the country of Benjamin and buried in the family sepulchre of Kish, the father of Saul.¹

b. *During Ahab's Reign*

(1) Jezebel

I know a family-tree in modern times from which stand the names of Shear-Jasub and Maher-sheal-hash-baz, but I know of no fond parents who have ever given the name of Jezebel to one of their offsprings. The names "Jezebel" and "Judas" are taboo. Yet it seems that Jezebel had many exalted traits of character. Had she been a devotee of Jehovah, I doubt not she would have ranked with the most praise-worthy of Israel's daughters. She, like Deborah, was courageous and executive, and she met her death every inch a queen, but her strong will was not bent toward the welfare of the masses, rather it was for the maintenance of autocratic ideals. She was a foreigner and instead of conserving the age-long customs of her subjects, she defied them, setting them aside with no more concern than one would fling a daily newspaper into the wastebasket. She filled the courts with the priests of Baal and she maintained elaborate services. Elijah feared not King Ahab who sought his life, nor did he fear the contest with the 450 priests of Baal, but he ran from Dan to Beersheba when Jezebel got on his trail. However, in the end, Elijah caused Jezebel's downfall. His commission to Elisha was to put to death all of the house of Ahab. Elisha waited ten years before the man and the hour seemed propitious, then he

1. IJ Sam. 21:12-14

caused Jehu to be appointed - the man who did complete the bloody work. In the execution of his commission, Jehu put to death Ahab's son Joram, the reigning king; seventy more of Ahab's sons; King Ahaziah of Judah, Ahab's grandson; forty-two of Ahaziah's relatives; other leading men; and queen Jezebel. Jezebel knew her death was coming. Did she swoon or fall in a panic? Far from it. She painted her eyes, attired her head, looked from her window upon her murderers, taunted them with their murderous designs and defied them to their faces. At Jehu's command, she was pitched from the window into the street. Jehu's chariots raced over the prostrate body. Then Jehu and his valiant followers went in to dinner. A qualm of conscience struck Jehu, for at the close of the meal, he gave order that Jezebel should be buried, for she was a king's daughter - but the street dogs had robbed the grave-diggers of their dues. Thus was fulfilled Elijah's prophecy: "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel."¹

(2) Micaiah

The story of Micaiah has to be told in full in order to sense the real heroism of this minor prophet.² In the days of Ahab, King of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, prophets held an important position. They recorded history, gave advice, uttered warnings, predicted events, and foretold the outcome of certain courses of action. Prophets were specially numerous in the reign of King Ahab, for he had 400 at his command who were doubtless connected with the royal sanctuary and maintained in the royal courts. One may surmise that there was a little rivalry between the king and the queen as to their groups of religious advisors. Jezebel had 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah who ate at her table. Ahab's 400 showed the effects of association with these prophets of Baal, for they had become so corrupt and mercenary that they thought more of gaining favor with the king than they did about knowing the word of the Lord.

Jehoshaphat had been called to Samaria to confer with Ahab on an affair of state. Ahab himself was an able ruler and a statesman of no mean order. He believed in a League of Nations. The question under consideration was this: Should Ahab attempt by force to take Ramoth Gilead from the Syrians? This city was a strategic point, as it controlled the eastern trade route which ran through to the Syrian capital, Damascus, and on to the far East. This city of Ramoth Gilead

1. I Kings 21:23

2. I Kings 22 and II Chron. 18

had been a journey of years, but after Ahab had become king he had won such a victory over the Syrians that King Benhadad, in order to save his life, had promised to return all the cities taken from Omri. He had promised - but he had not fulfilled! Consequently Ahab and Jehoshaphat, arrayed in their royal splendor, were seated upon thrones at the city gate - the place in those days for talking over momentous questions and for doing public business.

"Know ye not," said Ahab, "that Ramoth in Gilead is ours? The king of Syria, by treaty after the last war, ceded it to Israel. Why are we sitting still instead of occupying it?"

Then Ahab made known his plan of going in to take possession until the reparations granted by the fortune of war were forthcoming. Jehoshaphat's cooperation was required in order to insure success for the undertaking. Jehoshaphat advised a consultation with the prophets, for he was a man who depended upon the opinions of his spiritual leaders.

Ahab called forth his 400 prophets, stated the case, and asked their judgment. They conferred together. "The king," said they, "wishes to go to Ramoth Gilead. The king's desire is our concern. Let us stand together in upholding him in this project." Then they filed in before the king for report.

"Shall we," asked Ahab, "go up to Ramoth Gilead?"

"Yes," they all agreed, "go up to Ramoth Gilead, for the Lord shall deliver it into thy hand."

Apparently they were so very glib with their answer that the suspicions of Jehoshaphat were aroused. At once he asked Ahab if there was not another prophet.

"Yes," Ahab replied, "there is one other man, Micaiah, but I hate him for he never prophesies anything good concerning me - it is always evil."

But as Jehoshaphat still felt that it was best to hear from Micaiah, Ahab sent a messenger for him. While awaiting him, the 400 prophets kept assuring the king that he certainly would prosper in his desired undertaking. One of them, Zedekiah, in order to make his prophecy seem more effective, began to act it out. He provided himself with horns of iron and with these he pushed the crowds of people about the city gate this way and that way to illustrate how the Israelites would push the Syrians when they reached Ramoth Gilead, even until they completely overcame them.

Meanwhile the messenger had reached Micaiah and given him this advice: "Mark you," said he, "every one of the 400 prophets has prophesied good to the king. Now you do just as these have done - say just what they have said: 'Go up and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.' Speak that which is good." As much as to say: "Don't be a fool and set yourself up against the opinion of 400 men just as good as you are. Look out for your own interests and tell the king that which he wishes to hear. This will provide you with bread and butter and keep you in royal favor."

But Micaiah was a man of character. He replied that he ~~would~~ tell the king just what the word of the Lord was as it came to him. "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak."

So he came to the king. And Ahab said: "Micaiah, shall we go up against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall we not?"

What was Micaiah to answer? To stand out against the 400 prophets of the royal sanctuaries would be as difficult as for a teacher or doctor or clergyman to stand against 400 of his professional brethren. In the pause before the reply, I wonder if the messenger pulled at Micaiah's sleeve to remind him of his advice. At any rate, Micaiah, mimicking the messenger, repeated just what he been told to say: "Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

Ahab realized at once that Micaiah was ridiculing the 400 prophets by repeating, like a parrot, their exact words. He knew that Micaiah had not been in the habit of telling him pleasing things. Apparently, many times before this, Ahab had urged Micaiah to conform to the opinions of the crowd of prophets and acknowledge their word to be that of the Lord. But the mimicry at this time made him angry and he shouted out: "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?"

The supreme moment in the life of Micaiah had come - the moment which decided for all time just what kind of a man he was. Micaiah stood in the presence of two kings, seated upon their thrones, dressed in all the insignia of royalty and power. Jehoshaphat was waiting to learn if Micaiah would really speak God's message to them; Ahab, who had power to give him favor or power to put him to death, was already angered and would be much more enraged if Micaiah was not more diplomatic; the 400 prophets stood about, casting malevolent and unsympathetic glances in his direction; and, no doubt, a crowd of people had gathered about, curious to see how affairs would turn. Well they might be curious, for the soul of a man was being weighed in the balances. Micaiah was being given a test upon which all the

world would pass judgment. The situation was intense. Not a movement was made in the crowd. One could almost hear his neighbor's heart beat. Even the angels in heaven might well stop their singing to listen to Micaiah's answer. Would Micaiah pass that test or would he fail? Would he dare to tell the king the truth and take the consequences of the king's anger and hatred, or would he seek to save his own life by withholding the right message?

A look of calm determination settled on Micaiah's face; his shoulders squared; he fearlessly looked the king in the eye - indeed, he seemed to look right through him and away beyond, even to the hills of Ramoth Gilead.

"I see," said he, speaking very slowly but very courageously, "I see all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd; and the Lord is saying, 'These Israelites have no master, no king; let them return every man to his own house in peace!'"

This was a very different message from the flippant "Go up and prosper" which the 400 had uttered. Micaiah's words showed that he had passed his test with honor, but Ahab did not so regard it. Turning to Jehoshaphet, he snapped out: "Did not I tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?"

But Micaiah interrupted by saying: "Hear thou, therefore, the word of the Lord." Again, Micaiah seemed to be seeing a vision - this time far beyond the distant hills - away on into the very kingdom of the Unseen where God and his ministering spirits dwell. Scarcely a breath stirred while Micaiah verbally painted with few strokes the scene:

"The Lord sits upon his throne. About Him are the Heavenly host. They are passing judgment upon Ahab, the sinful king. Ahab has failed to meet the divine requirements. What shall be his punishment? Death at Ramoth Gilead. How shall Ahab be induced to go to Ramoth Gilead? Put a lying spirit within all of Ahab's paid prophets - his 400 prophets."

There was a quick intake of breath, a gasp of horror at Micaiah's audacity. Followed by loud protesting murmurs, the king was driven into a howl of rage. Bedecked, as with the iron horns, his face ablaze with anger, struck Micaiah a sharp blow on the cheek as he blurted out: "Liar! Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?"

"You will know who has been telling the truth," Micaiah made reply, "on that day when you run to hide yourself in the dark closet of an inner chamber."

By this time Ahab had found his voice and he bawled out: "Arrest Micaiah! Take this fellow to the governor of the city and to my son Joash and command them in my name, to put him into prison and to feed him on the bread of affliction and the water of affliction and keep him there until I return from Ramoth Gilead in peace."

But our hero called back from over his shoulder as he was being hurried off to prison: "If you return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken to me. Harken, all ye people, every one of you, and remember my words."

Ahab, very stubbornly, set himself to prepare for the conquest of Ramoth Gilead. He did take the precaution to go into battle in disguise, for he changed clothing with Jehoshaphat. But Ahab did not escape punishment. A certain man drew a bow at a venture and by this chance shot sent an arrow which mortally wounded the king of Israel. Although seriously hurt, Ahab bravely remained with his army, propped up in his chariot where he directed his men while his life's blood slowly trickled from his wound to the floor of the chariot. So long as he lived his men fought, but weaker and weaker, through the loss of blood did he become, until, at eventide, Ahab, the King of Israel, sank dead in the bottom of his own war chariot. Just at the going down of the sun, proclamation was sent throughout the army of Israel that their king was dead and that every man was to return to his own country.

Thus was fulfilled Micaiah's prophecy: "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no shepherd, no master: let them return every man to his own house in peace."

4. During the period from 650 B.C. to 500 B.C.

a. Nahum.

The type of heroism displayed both by Micaiah and by Ahab is characteristic of the Hebrew people. The race, when put to the test, has always exhibited courage, endurance, and fortitude. Another racial trait, not so admirable, is portrayed in the prophecy of Nahum.

Nahum exulted over the prospect of the fall of Nineveh. He lived when Nineveh was losing hold of the outskirts of her immense empire and was tottering to her fall. No Old Testament writer has surpassed Nahum in a description of supreme exultation felt on the eve of disaster to a foe. Nahum was a poet of high rank. His prophecy is called, poetically, one of the finest products of Hebrew writings.¹ He paints the scene of the downfall of Nineveh as if he were an eye-witness. The scenes not only prove to be accurate portrayals of what later took place, but the words he chooses are such as to produce a rhythm that rumbles and roars and crashes with all the noise of actual battle. A few lines will suffice to illustrate this:

"Hear the crack of the whip,
Hear the rattle of wheels,
Galloping horses,
Jolting chariots,
Horsemen charging,
Swords flashing,
Swords glittering,
A multitude slain,
A heap of carcasses;
No end to the corpses
Over which men stumble."²

The Hebrew people are intense - they love devotedly and they hate fiercely. Nahum fairly exults over Nineveh's overthrow. He can feel his elation when he cries:

1. Driver's "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament", p. 556

2. Nahum 3:3

"Where now is the den of lions,
Where now the lair of their young,
Where the lion was wont to withdraw
And his cubs, with none to disturb them? ¹
Ah! how your shepherds slumber, your nobles sleep!
Your people are scattered on the mountains with
none to gather them in!
There is no healing for your hurt,
your wound is incurable.

All who hear of your fate loudly clap their hands."²

Nahum stressed the severity of God: "Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies."³ On the other hand he had lofty conceptions in regard to Jehovah, for he proclaims his "slowness to anger and his greatness in power."⁴ He sets in clear light Jehovah's sway over the whole universe, and emphasizes the duty of nations as well as individuals to own his sway and obey his will. This attitude alone will assure permanent peace and prosperity; on the other hand, disobedience to his purpose and disregard of his rule will surely bring calamity and distress."⁵

b. Haggai

We turn now from the artistic to the practical. Haggai was an extremely practical man. There is nothing flowery in his speech, but there is earnestness and conviction. He accepted the explanation of his grandfathers and sought to influence the people in the good old ways. He took note of the way the people lived and of the crops in the fields. Then he made several convincing statements: "Consider your ways," he said. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages

1. Nahum 2:11

2. Nahum 3:18, 19

3. Nahum 1:2

4. Nahum 1:3

5. Eiselen's "Prophecy and the Prophets", pp. 173, 174.

earneth wages to put into a bag with holes...Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith Jehovah of hosts. Because of my house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house."¹

His arguments were convincing. He talked to such purpose that the people soon set to work and they kept at it until in four years' time the Temple was complete and dedicated. Haggai's ethical standards were not so high as some put forth by other prophets - for Haggai's are a sort of balance of debits and credits in the account with the Lord - you do for Him and He will do for you - build His house if you expect Him to give you good returns in the field and vineyard - but perhaps the people of his day would not have been reached except on a utilitarian basis.

c. Zechariah

Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai and the prophecies of the two men were on the same subject - that of rebuilding the Temple in the days of Zerubbabel - but Zechariah was not so concerned in material structure of the Temple as he was in inspiring the people to live spiritual lives in conformity to Hebrew ideals. Zechariah and Haggai must have been about as different as it is possible for two men to be. Haggai, prosy and practical, Zechariah with a wealth of imagery and exceedingly visionary. Zechariah's teachings about God and religion are not original - they echo those of Isaiah and Ezekiel. "Zechariah," says Gordon, "is immersed in the style and thought of those through whom God spoke in earlier days ... The spiritual ideals which Zechariah cherishes are likewise in perfect harmony with those of former prophets... The true glory of Jerusalem is found in its devotion to Jehovah's will... The mould, however, in which Zechariah enshrines his oracles is new. In him we find a definite approach to apocalypse, that peculiar literary form under which spiritual truths are impressed, not by direct appeal to heart and conscience, but by elaborate visions of the transcendental world addressed to the imagination... Amid such bright dreams of future glory the (Temple) building rose toward completion."²

1. Haggai 1:5, 6, 9

2. Gordon's "The Prophets of the Old Testament," pp. 286, 287

5. During the Maccabean period.

The Maccabean period was marked by the struggle for religious and political freedom and by the development of several sects and parties, the most noteworthy being those of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

If ever a crisis loomed large on Israel's horizon it was when the Greek ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, was determined to force all peoples to accept Greek language, customs, laws, and religion. The Jews were almost alone in refusing to comply with the demands. Many of the Jews did yield, but a brave few gave their lives to maintain the right for religious freedom.

a. Mattathias Old Mattathias, the father of five brave sons, struck the first blow.¹ He slew the apostate priest who complied with the demand to offer swine's flesh upon the altar of Jehovah and he also slew the Greek officer in charge. Then he left all his worldly possessions and fled to the mountains with his sons. Others followed, and hundreds faced the deaths of martyrs rather than to fight on the Sabbath or to give up their religious customs.² On his deathbed, the grand old man, Mattathias, exhorted his sons to "be zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. My sons, be strong, and show yourselves men in behalf of the law. Avenge the wrong of your people. Render a recompense to the heathen, and give heed to the commands of the law."³ After nominating Judas as military leader and Simon as chief counselor, Mattathias was gathered to his fathers and his sons were left to complete the work their father had started.

b. Judas Few leaders have shown a nobler patriotism or fought at greater odds than did Judas. He had an unorganized group of religious enthusiasts who were homeless, fugitive, and unarmed. Guerrilla warfare was all Judas could wage at first, but he was successful eventually in getting a fair equipment for his loyal group.⁴ It was almost uncanny how he managed his small forces. He took advantage of the country, made surprise attacks,⁵ and struck terror in the hearts

1. I Mac. 2:19, 24

2. I Mac. 2:22-23

3. I Mac. 2:20, 24, 28

4. I Mac. 2:28, 29 and 3:12

5. Kent's "Makers and Teachers of Judaism", pp. 211, 212

of the superiorly trained forces of the enemy. After repeated victories, the Greeks decided to give the Jews their religious liberty, so that in three years' time the Jews under Judas, cleansed the Temple, and held their first service.¹ Religious liberty was all that the most of the Jews cared for, especially the group that afterwards developed into the Pharisaical party. Judas, however, felt that he saw his way to political liberty and kept fighting on. His brother, Eleazar, lost his life in a brave attempt to kill the Greek king by stabbing in the belly the elephant on which he supposed the king was riding, but he was mistaken in this particular and thus did not accomplish his purpose.² Judas fought on, until he, too, met his death in the battle line, and his brother Jonathan took up the contest.³

c. Jonathan Jonathan was a very different type from Judas, not so upright, more tricky, more inclined to believe anything was right in order to accomplish his purpose. He showed racial traits such as were demonstrated in the relations of Jacob with Laban, shrewdness and deceit. The circumstances were favorable. Two leaders were contending for the kingship among the Greeks, - Alexander Balas against Demetrius I. Civil war went on and Jonathan played one king off against the other until these kings, first one and then the other, to get his support, made him friend to the king, gave him marks of royalty, and, finally, made him civil and religious head of the Jewish state. He also received a great reduction in taxes so that to all intents and purposes the Jews, under Jonathan, had political as well as religious freedom. But in the game of wits, Jonathan was at last overmatched, caught in a plot, and put to death. Only Simon was now left.⁴

d. Simon Simon, in many ways, was the best of the brothers, wise in counsel, loyal in purpose, deeply religious, a good military leader, a devoted patriot, and a noble-spirited man. He enlarged the borders of the Jewish state, became civil governor, military leader, high priest, and he even had coins issued in his name - a prerogative of kings. He captured the stronghold at Jerusalem which had withstood all

1. IMac. 4:48-58

2. I Mac. 6:48-49

3. I Mac. 9:18, 31

4. I Mac. 9:80-13:25

previous assaults, so that he reigned as an independent sovereign during the remainder of his life. His son-in-law murdered him, hoping thereby to step into Simon's high position, but in this he miscalculated the strength of Simon's son, John Hyrcanus.¹

e. Hyrcanus

John Hyrcanus was an able second to his father, Simon, and proved a good military leader. The author of I Maccabees sums up his life by saying; "As concerning the rest of the acts of John, and his wars, and worthy deeds which he did, and the building of the walls which he made, and his doings, behold, these are written in the chronicles of the priesthood, from the time he was made high priest after his father."² Josephus adds: "He it was alone who had three of the most desirable things in the world, - the government of his nation, and the highpriesthood, and the gift of prophecy."³

But John Hyrcanus's change from allegiance to the Pharisees to that of the Sadducees is of special note, for from this we learn that the two parties were then well defined.

The Pharisees were opposed to conquests for political position - all they cared for was religious liberty. They would take up arms for no other cause. They did not believe in foreign alliances, for these seemed to show disloyalty to the covenant with Jehovah. They were strictly a religious party and, although they stood by the law, yet they were progressives in religion and came to place as much value on the oral traditions and rabbinical rulings and interpretations as on the Mosaic law itself. They developed angelology and demonology and believed in the resurrection of the body and in life immortal. They also stressed Messianic hopes.⁴

The Sadducees were the direct opposite of the Pharisees in almost every particular. They were aristocratic rather than democratic. They were the priestly party who had become wealthy and influential through their inherited position in the Temple services. They believed in foreign alliances - anything that would advance their worldly interests. They accepted the Mosaic law,

1. I Mac. 2:35 and I Mac. 13:13:16

2. I Mac. 16:23, 24

3. Josephus' "Wars of the Jews", I, 2:7

4. Matthews' "A History of New Testament Times in Palestine", pp. 64-66

but no rabbinical additions. They did not believe in the resurrection of the body, nor in immortality, therefore, of course, they did not believe in angels nor demons. They took advantage of all favors given by the Greeks and fell in with the Greek customs whenever they served their purpose or political advancement.¹

We have noted that it was the group of people holding the opinions which developed into Pharisaism that were the followers of Mattathias. Therefore it is of import that John Hyrcanus, the grandson of Mattathias, made the first decided break with that party. John Hyrcanus had been very friendly with the Pharisees. At one time, when entertaining them at a banquet, he told them of his desire to live righteously and expressed the wish that they would tell him if they saw him "offending at any point." The most of them testified to his "being entirely virtuous." But one trouble-maker was bold enough to remark: "Since thou desirest to know the truth, if thou wilt be righteous in earnest, lay down the high priesthood, and contest thyself with the civil government of the people." Upon hearing this remark, said to him, the Pharisee replied: "We have heard it from old men, that thy mother had been a captive under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes." This was a falsehood which Hyrcanus so bitterly resented that he broke with the company of the Pharisees.²

1. Matthews: "History of New Testament Times in Palestine," pp. 66, 67

2. Josephus "Antiquities of the Jews, XIII, 10:5-7

III. Summary and evaluation

A. Primary characters

1. Religious ideals

The biblical writers considered Abraham like a lofty mountain peak which casts its shadow not only across that stretch of history known as the nomadic days before the advent of Moses, but also on through all of Hebrew history. Abraham is portrayed as a man who manifested implicit faith in Jehovah and who obeyed His every command; who felt that Jehovah had covenanted with him as the representative of "all the families of the earth"; who talked with Jehovah as friend with friend; and who was obedient to all of Jehovah's requirements, even though they called for the death of his son. The form of worship during Abraham's day was very simple. A stone served for an altar and Abraham himself officiated as priest wherever he sojournd. There is no evidence that Jehovah dwelt in any specific place during the nomadic days.

The portrayal of religious life and ideals in the days of Moses, although in some particulars similar, in other ways it differed greatly from that of Abraham's day. Jehovah now had definite dwelling places which were so sacred that no one but his servant Moses would dare to draw near. He spoke to the people through Moses, rather than directly to them, and He gave Moses a code of laws. Like Abraham, Moses talked with God, advised Him, and reasoned with Him. Moses recognized Jehovah as the God of his fathers, the patriarchs, and claimed for the Israelites the promises made to them. But more emphasis was made of a nature-God, for natural phenomena were considered manifestations of Jehovah's presence. This interpretation did not make for tranquility of mind but rather struck terror to the hearts of His people. The form of worship became more complicated. All offerings were made by Aaron and his sons. A tent was prepared to cover the ark which symbolized Jehovah's presence and some regular feasts came to be observed.

In the days of the kingdom, under David, the great religious development came through making Jerusalem the city of Jehovah. The ark was moved to Zion and David made preparations for building a Temple which should be permanent. Though he did not place

this building, his name, even today, is inseparably connected with the city and its religious life. He chose for his counselors prophets and priests, he consulted with them and gave heed to their warnings. He was a religious man who acknowledged God as his source of strength and as worthy of honor and worship.

Whether rightly or not, David's name is always connected with music. Psalms were attributed to him and he was called skillful upon the harp.

Through Isaiah's prophecy we get a powerful emphasis on the holiness and majesty of Jehovah. Isaiah's whole life radiated spirituality. His conceptions were lofty, his ideals were noble, and his life was one of consecrated service to his God-given mission. His teachings on faith in God and the universality of God's sovereignty far surpassed those of the preceding prophets. His religion was a personal experience, it was practical, and it was the guiding principle of his life. Yet religion to the people of his day was mostly formal - so formal that Isaiah had to bitterly rebuke the worshippers who followed the form from which the spirit had departed.

The expression, "the priest in the prophet's mantle" sums up adequately the trend of the development of religious ideas under Ezekiel, for Judaism, as we know it today, had its conception and birth, and Ezekiel was called its "father". Definite form of ritualistic worship was enjoined upon the Jews and to follow the law became their very religion. Legalism was not only a corner-stone, but the whole foundation of their religious structure. Another strong emphasis made by Ezekiel was on individualism. He taught that the individual was responsible for his own sins and that he did not have to suffer punishment for the sins of others.

Nehemiah, nearly 150 years later than Ezekiel, upon his return from Persia to Palestine, found the religious life of the Jews most unsatisfactory. The people of mixed blood had not developed any marked religious leaders, therefore, Palestinian Judaism had fallen into decay. Nehemiah instituted reforms, based directly on Deuteronomic laws, such as: keeping the Sabbath day holy, observing the fasts, purifying the Temple, forbidding marriages with foreigners. We have noted that these reforms led to the separation of a group of people who came to be known as the Samaritans. Nehemiah did not originate any new doctrines or conceptions of Jehovah - he simply tried to make the people live up to the ideals set forth by their fathers.

2. Social ideals

In summarizing the social ideals of the primary characters, Abraham exemplified brotherliness which regarded another's interests of as much concern as one's own; hospitality which shared with strangers as well as one's immediate family connections; democracy which allowed a younger and less influential man to have his choice of territory; and public service in righting wrongs without any expectation of reward.

Moses was an organizer who developed social as well as priestly institutions. He had officials of different grades to administer justice to all the people; he maintained discipline and order; he recognized the worth and service of other people, notably his father-in-law Jethro; he built up a democratic society.

David accomplished the colossal task of unifying a group of tribes into a nation. This called for organization and specialization. He made Jerusalem a national center with a strong emphasis on its religious and social features, - the place "whither the tribes went up." He extended the bounds of the country, exacted tribute from neighboring lands and made foreign alliances. Commerce was developed and national interests protected.

Everything that Isaiah and Ezekiel did was from a religious motive, but they definitely influenced the political and social life of their times. Isaiah was a counselor of kings and whole-heartedly disapproved of foreign alliances; Ezekiel counselled the exiles. Both prophets taught that the Israelites were to be a separate people, wholly relying on Jehovah and consecrated to His service. Their forms of worship, however, were different: Isaiah cried out against vain offerings and oblations, while Ezekiel stressed formal service.

Nehemiah greatly influenced the social life and ideals of Judea during his time. He found the walls broken down and he had them rebuilt, thus making it possible for the people to protect themselves from the assaults of robbers and hostile foes. He found desecration of the Sabbath with trade in full progress on that day; he found usury exacted and the poor

forced to sell their children into slavery; he found foreign marriages common. He denounced all these practices and brought about a marked reform. He organized affairs of state and church - the Temple was cleansed, feasts were observed, and the law was read and explained. All his work tended toward establishing strict Judaism.

F. Secondary characters

1. Religious ideals

In summarizing the contributions made by the secondary characters to the religious and social life of Israel, we shall keep in mind the ideas formulated by the primary characters. In the development of religious ideals, the secondary characters followed their great leaders and did not add any new ideals, unless we except Jethro.

Jethro, although not an Israelite, was placed among the secondary characters because, as we believe, he helped develop Moses' ideas concerning Jehovah. In Jethro's declaration that Jehovah is the greatest of all gods and in his manner of worshipping Jehovah by means of burnt offerings and sacrifices, Jethro proclaimed Jehovah's supremacy and also the manner in which He should be worshipped. Jethro, himself, as host and priest, officiated at a public ceremony which appears to be something like a communion feast, for "Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God."¹ It is certain that the Israelites continued this form of worship.

In the story of Balaam, the primitive ideas about God - such as were current in the days of Abraham and Moses - are found. God speaks to Balaam and displays His anger when Balaam is on his way to Balak. Balaam speaks the words that God puts in his mouth and, from these words, we know Balaam recognized Jehovah as the God of Israel: "Jehovah his God is with him (Jacob)" and "God bringeth them forth from Egypt."²

In Caleb, Deborah, and Gideon, we note the same spirit of faith and confidence in Jehovah that was shown in Moses. All

1. Ex. 18:12

2. Num. 22:9, 22, 38; 23:21, 22

recognized Jehovah's leadership and went forth to conquest in His might, assured that He would give them victory.

In the later period of time, also, Micaiah showed anthropomorphic ideas about God, for in his vision he saw Jehovah on a throne, surrounded by all the heavenly host from whom He asked and received advice,¹ and he declared as emphatically as did Balaam: "As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak."²

Nahum had learned from the Law that Jehovah was both a "jealous God" and also "merciful and gracious and slow to anger."³ He echoed these teachings in his prophecy, with a strong emphasis, however, on God's jealousy and wrath. Nahum declared: "Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies!"⁴

Haggai interpreted Jehovah's characteristics from the viewpoint of a bookkeeper. He implied that a balance sheet of debits and credits was kept, therefore, it was advisable to place as much credit to one's account with the Lord as possible in order to receive good returns for services done in His honor. But this was not new teaching from Haggai, for, from the days of Abraham, a covenant had been recognized as existing,⁵ and covenant relations presupposed mutual agreements and obligations.

Zechariah's teachings about God and religion are not original, as was found in comparing them with those of Isaiah and Ezekiel. We have seen, however, that Zechariah used a literary form for expressing his prophecies which was different from that of his earlier prophets. He had the example of his predecessor, Ezekiel, in the use of visions and allegories, but Zechariah took an advance step in the use of apocalyptic symbols and in the development of angelology.

The last group of secondary characters, the Maccabees, had such faith and confidence in God that they were ready to die for their religious ideals. Their heroic deeds in the name of religion have inspired others to remain steadfast under perse-

1. I Kings 22:19ff

4. Nahum 1:3

2. I Kings 22:14

5. Gen. 17:2

3. Ex. 20:5 and 34:6

caution. Mattathias admonished his sons to "give your lives for the covenant of your fathers" and "consider ... that none that put their trust in him shall be overcome."¹ Of much importance in Maccabean times was the development of the Pharisees and Sadducees for they remained influential factors until the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and Pharisaism has lived on to the present time as typical of the Jewish faith.

From this summary it will be seen that many changes have taken place in the Hebrew life and religion, but all are of a nature to keep the Jews distinct from other races and religions. We may also conclude that the secondary characters have not added much to the sum total of advanced religious conceptions, but they have maintained, and in some cases proclaimed, the principles proclaimed by their great prophets and leaders.

2. Social ideals

The influence of the secondary characters upon developing social ideals seems to me more marked than it was upon their religious ideals. It is perfectly evident that no secondary character can claim for an instant to be placed on a level with Isaiah in regard to spiritual insight and prophetic utterance, but even Isaiah did not surpass these humbler people in the exemplification of certain homely virtues. In the whole category of the Hebrews' most notable worthies, we do not find any record which surpasses Ruth's friendship for Naomi nor Jonathan's for David; Ittai's and Hushai's loyalty; Benaiah's and Judas Maccabeus' courage and valor; Micah's steadfast purpose to speak the truth; Deborah's enthusiasm for a righteous cause; Rahab's faith; and Rizpah's maternal devotion. Such examples are not alone effective for their own times, but they make for something imperishable for all times.

The unworthy characters also served a purpose, for they show as definitely what was condemned in Hebrew social ideals as the worthy characters show what was approved. The very fact that Balaam's name has been spit out in hissing execrations for thirty or more centuries of time shows that the sacrifice of high ideals for a money return is not countenanced in the best Hebrew society. Nor were Jezebel's tyrannical, autocratic, unscrupulous actions to be tolerated, even though she were a queen. The Hebrews never tried to conceal sin.

1. I Mac. 2:50, 61

They published accounts of the results of sinful actions in order that the wise might take heed and thus avoid similar consequences.

The Maccabees, Judas, Jonathan, Simon, and John Hyrcanus, all made a strong impress upon the social as well as the religious ideals. Judas was a noble patriot who gave his all for his country; Jonathan, by his diplomacy, built up the Judean state and won many concessions from the ruling powers which made life more livable for the Jews; Simon was king in all but name and he administered ecclesiastical and civil affairs most wisely; and John Hyrcanus, according to Josephus, left a most favorable impression on his day and generation. Great changes took place during the Maccabean period as is evidenced by the growth of sects, such as the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and by the maintenance of real national life for nearly a century of time.

In all the changes that we have noted in religious and social ideals, the secondary characters have had a prominent place, even though they may not have attracted great attention in the performance of their daily duties. Yet their meager stories have found a place in Hebrew history and time has revealed the lasting influence of their lives. They have shown themselves humane, chaste, and optimistic. They stressed keeping the law, its institutions of Sabbaths, feasts, and circumcision, its observance of purification, and its separation from Gentiles, especially in regard to marriages. They believed in righteousness, justice, mercy, love, and vicarious suffering.

All honor to these lesser characters who have heroically upheld the standards set by the seers of visions, the inspired of Jehovah. The torches of the pioneers in Israel's history would never have thrown their lights so far, if the secondary characters had not lighted lesser torches at their shrines and carried them into more remote and darkened corners.



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